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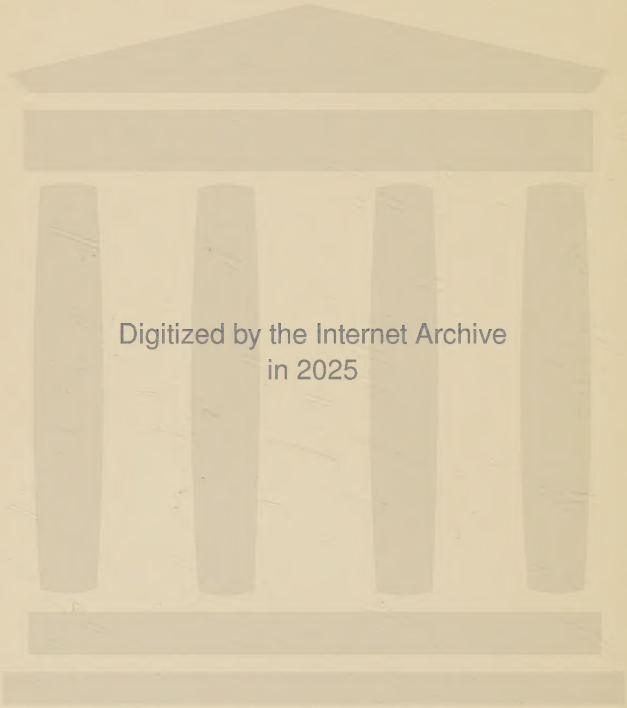
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THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

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BY

BORDEN PARKER BOWNE

1847–1910

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PREFACE

The author of these sermons found many opportunities to "minister to the conscience of men." He always kept a warm heart for humanity, and was absorbed by a passion for helping others. During his thirty-four years of service as a Christian teacher he was constantly sought, in his lecture-room and in his home, by those who needed him. And so he bound up the broken-hearted, strengthened those of feeble will, and gave inspiration and cheer to all who came in contact with him. He showed men and women, as never before, that the essence of religion lies in the filial spirit, in the desire to serve and please God, and in the daily life pervaded and sanctified by this spirit, offered up in service and worship.

It was not strange that he was urged to preach, and also to publish his sermons in book form so that they might have a wider hearing; and at the time of his departure for

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the life beyond he had nearly made ready this group for the press.

Some of these sermons have been printed elsewhere — "Religion and Life" appears in "Modern Sermons by World Scholars"; "The Church and the Kingdom of God" was one in a course of sermons delivered before the Union Theological Seminary; "The Supremacy of Christ" was preached during a visit in the Orient, to crowds of eager listeners; "Prayer" was written to strengthen the faith of a member of the home circle, and at her request given to a larger audience one memorable Sabbath at Wellesley College. Throughout this book there are familiar echoes of private and public speech.

"If," to use the author's own words, "the great end of religion is a developed soul, a soul with a deep sense of God, a soul in which faith, courage, and resolution are at their highest," then the writer of these sermons had in this life entered into the fullest realization of all he taught to others.

His Wife.

Boston, November 7, 1910.

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I

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

I

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. — *John* 6 : 68.

The superficial disciples of Jesus were beginning to fall away when these words were uttered. He had begun to unfold the deeper truths concerning himself and his mission, and many took offense at them and walked no more with him. "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

In these words Peter, by implication, sets Jesus on high as the supreme Teacher, with whom no one else is to be compared and whose teachings are so great and worthy that they are rightly called words of eternal life. And this conviction of the apostle is more and

more justified by the religious life of the race. The religious history of humanity is daily becoming better known. In the last century it was possible to claim that religion is adventitious to human nature, not even an excrescence, but rather a barnacle generated by fraud and ignorance. This is the case no longer. As our geographical and historical knowledge has extended, it has become clear that man is naturally religious. So much is this the case that unbelief now commonly takes the form of claiming that all religions alike are the natural outcome of that religious sentiment which is instinctive in human nature; just as the various art products of the race in all their forms are to be traced to the æsthetic instinct which is founded in human nature. But however this may be, we stand to-day in the face of vast religious systems of which our fathers never dreamed. Christianity has to confront great historic religions, older and having more adherents than itself. The Christian missionary finds himself in the presence of old and venerable faiths, with their bibles, their tem-

ples, and their supernatural history. Indeed, their sacred books have been translated in some twenty odd volumes, and we read them in our own tongue. Christ, then, is but one of many religious teachers.

Along with this growing historical knowledge has developed a still more wonderful knowledge of nature. The nature upon which the thinker of to-day looks out has almost nothing in common with nature as it seemed to men in the apostles' day. Limits have vanished in both space and time; and instead of the simple bodies of the senses we have a wonderful mysterious energy on which all things forever depend and from which they forever proceed. We have a threefold infinitude — infinitude of extension, infinitude of duration, infinitude of power; and then, brooding impenetrable over all, an infinitude of mystery. But none of these things, nor all of them together, have in any way returned an answer to Peter's question. Standing in the face of our increased knowledge of the world and of man, we can only repeat his word: "Lord,

to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." More and more it is becoming apparent that for knowledge and help and hope concerning the deepest things of God and life and destiny we must depend on Jesus Christ or abandon ourselves to apathy or despair.

Our greatest need in matters of religion is to know how to think about God, what he is and what he means. Our next greatest need is to know how to think about ourselves, our life and destiny. This unseen being in whom more or less blindly all men believe, what is he? Is he perhaps some metaphysical perfection to which right and wrong are indifferent? And if he be a moral being, what is his attitude toward us? Does he forgive sin or hear prayer? Indeed, does he care for us at all; or are we rather forever beneath his notice? And this life of ours — does it mean anything or tend to anything? Is there any outcome to human history; or is it only an uncared-for product of eternal laws which roll on forever and with equal indifference to life and death? These

are the supreme questions to which the earnest minds of the race have ever been seeking an answer; and the only answer which commands the assent of the enlightened mind, heart and conscience is the answer given by Jesus Christ. He tells us of a Father and Almighty Friend upon the throne. Our God is not an absentee apart from the world in self-enjoyment, but he is present in the world, in life, in conscience and history, carrying on a great moral campaign for the conquest and training of the human will and its establishment in righteousness. We are now God's children, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when God's will concerning us has been wrought out, we shall be like him and shall see him as he is. Meanwhile all good things are safe in the plan and power of God, and are moving irresistibly Godward, for nothing can thwart God's righteousness and loving will. Such is the answer of Jesus Christ to our eager questioning concerning God and life and destiny; and this answer in its clearness and power to produce

conviction and control life we owe entirely to him.

By this I do not mean that God has nowhere else revealed himself to men; but I mean that all other revelations are obscure, uncertain, and incomplete in comparison with the revelation by and in Jesus Christ. In the confusion and groping of the childhood of the race they served a temporary purpose and were better than nothing. They furnished a bond of union for scattered and warring tribes. They kept alive a sense of the invisible, and gave to human relations and duties a measure of divine sanction. To be sure, they often erred and strayed most grievously from the way, and never attained to any clear and comprehensive moral and spiritual insight; but in the main we can see that they performed a beneficent function in the life of men. So much we can see in the light of Christian thought, but we can see it only in the light of Christian thought. If we may believe in God as Jesus has revealed him, we can readily believe that he has never left himself without

a witness in the hearts of men, and that he has used these blind gropings and blurred apprehensions of men as means of reaching him while the way was preparing for the perfect revelation of himself in his Son. But if we must believe that Jesus was mistaken, that he did not reveal the Father, then the sure result of the loss of this higher faith will be the loss of all lower forms by those who have developed far enough to understand the higher. We can go back to atheism or to agnosticism, but we cannot go back to Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or Hinduism or Confucianism, or to any of the myriad forms of polytheism and superstition. In the times of human ignorance and childhood these systems may have served a temporary purpose in the divine education of the race; but in the development of intelligence and conscience a point is reached where we must go beyond them or abandon them altogether. One who has learned in the school of Christ can accept no other conception of God than that which Christ revealed. The Epicurean gods, the immoral gods,

the vindictive gods of the heathen pantheon, stand hopelessly condemned and repudiated by the consciousness of modern civilization. They are equally condemned by modern intelligence. A mind which has been formed by the study of nature and the world of law cannot tolerate the superstitions of these decaying systems. They are doomed in any case. They are not able to think any worthy thought of God or of man. They furnish no hope and no inspiration. Hence, for us, the alternative is Jesus Christ or nothing. If he was mistaken, then all lower religious effort was all the more mistaken; and there is nothing to do but to look upon the religious history of the race as a phase of the total cosmic process without any abiding significance, somewhat tragic indeed, when viewed from the human standpoint, but after all only a transient phase of a transient humanity. It is only as we hold the higher faith of Christianity that we can find anything divine in lower faiths.

The supremacy of Jesus further appears when we turn to the study of nature to get an

answer to the supreme questions concerning God and life and destiny. Here, also, Jesus alone has words of eternal life. We get a great deal of valuable information from this study, valuable for practice, valuable for enlarging and correcting our thoughts ; but to those supreme questions we get no certain answer, and for life itself we get no supreme inspiration.

The study of nature has for the most part been carried on by Christian men, and the interpretation of nature has taken place under the influence of Christian ideas. These have steadied and directed our thought to an unsuspected extent. The fundamental doctrine of monotheism was reached less by speculative reflection than by the positive teaching of the church. This made it a matter of course. In particular the moral interpretation of nature has been thus influenced. In the sure and settled conviction of a God of goodness, we have not been distressed or even disturbed at the sinister aspects of nature; and thus we have failed to get the impression which a purely inductive study of nature would make upon us.

And the conviction has been very general that God's goodness and righteousness are very clearly and unambiguously revealed in the natural world. But this conviction has received many a rude shock in our day. To begin with, the theistic conception itself is seen to involve mysteries so impenetrable that thought gropes and staggers in the attempt to grasp it. Then the doing away with all spatial and temporal limits in the cosmic process leaves us almost without the conditions of thinking. And when we study the phases and products of this process, we find ourselves equally unable to comprehend the power and the purpose which underlie the whole. There is very little that we should have expected and a great deal that we should not have expected. And in the organic world we find the same unintelligibility, and, in addition, the positive fact of pain and death. The whole creation groans and travails together in pain. And in the midst of this unintelligible scene, man, a helpless and transitory creature, finds himself placed, a momentary inhabitant of a mere speck in the boundless material sys-

tem, and subject to the same laws as rule in all organic life, — birth, pain, struggle for existence, all ended by speedy death. This is the picture which nature alone presents. It knows nothing of immortality. The recurrent spring, the chrysalis and the butterfly, and similar images, serve well enough to express a faith already possessed, but they are exasperating when adduced as arguments. Both the individual and the species perish. The immortality of a type is a rather shadowy thing at best, and such as it is, it is only a fiction. Sooner or later, individuals and types alike pass. Nature knows nothing of immortality of any sort, and it is highly ambiguous on the fundamental doctrine of the divine goodness. So much so that those who have broken away from Christianity in our time have very largely fallen a prey to pessimism and despair. So far, so infinitely far, is nature from having words of eternal life. And the great and only sufficient barrier to this way of thinking is Jesus Christ. He is manifestly the Light of the world, the Desire of nations, the Hope of humanity.

More and more the thought and hope of the modern world centre about Jesus Christ. Of the many religious masters of the race, Jesus Christ is the only one that lives as a present personal power and inspiration. Others have left systems and disciples behind them, but the masters themselves are dead. Their power was in their words, not in themselves. Just the opposite is the case with Jesus Christ. His power is in himself. What he was — not what he said — is what influences men. And by simply standing in the midst of history before the eyes of men, he has become the Revealer and Searcher of hearts, the Judge of the world, the Rebuker of its iniquity, the Inspirer of its good, its great Leader against evil, and the Hope and Head of all who look for the redemption of humanity. Anna in the temple spoke of the child Jesus to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. The course of history bids all who hope for a redeemed world to look for him.

In the biblical world Jesus Christ has become the centre and completion of revelation.

He is the supreme revealer and revelation, and the only final authority. Long since he became the proof of the Bible, so that now our main concern for the Bible depends on its relation to him. So long as we have him, we have all that is important in revelation; and if he were taken away, it would matter little what else might be left. One good result of modern biblical study has been to fix the attention of the Christian world on Christ himself rather than on the Bible, and to show, moreover, that Christ is the centre of the Christian faith. Whatever criticism has shaken, it has only brought out more fully the testimony of history to Jesus Christ. And any one whose faith may have been disturbed concerning the biblical literature should find relief in this thought, that Jesus Christ more and more appears the unshakable corner-stone against which no gates of hell shall ever prevail.

Again, Jesus Christ has become the chief inspiration and support of the conscience of the modern world. It is a great warfare which

is waging in the upbuilding of men. A vast body of forces and impulses tend to drag men downward. Men are of the earth by one side of their nature; and the earth draws and claims its own. Hence the sense-life proves so attractive. And many are found who persistently claim that the sense-life is all. On this plane selfishness and animalism soon develop; and the strong begin to think meanly of the weak and to oppress the weak; and caste is born; and oppression and tyranny go hand in hand with animalism for the destruction of humanity. This tendency has been manifold in manifestation, but it is ever the same in spirit, and it is far enough from being finally cast out. And the most powerful agent against it is the life and words of Jesus Christ. He has borne the most effective testimony to the supreme worth of the individual man, and delivered the most effective rebuke to all attempts to degrade him. Nowadays whenever any one wishes to make a great and solemn appeal on behalf of humanity, there is almost sure to be some implicit reference to Jesus

Christ. And the most effective rebuke of the world's selfishness, the most searching illumination of its evil, are found in simply placing them face to face with the mind of Christ. On the other hand, there is no way of arousing repentance and hope in the sinful mind so effective as to bring it face to face with Christ. He is the apostle of humanity. He knows what is in man. He identifies himself with all its members. The good or evil done to the least of his brethren is done to him; and the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple does not pass unnoticed. Against all worldliness, and selfishness, and oppression, the great barrier and the great condemnation are found in the teaching and authority and personality of Jesus Christ.

Again, Jesus Christ is the great barrier against pessimism and despair. I have before spoken of the depressing aspects of nature, and the depression pursues us into our theory of man himself. What with the influence of heredity and environment, a great many are found who deny, and many more who doubt,

the possibility of reforming men or making much of them in any way. Here again Jesus is the great optimist and has a gospel of hope for all who will receive it. The weary and heavy-laden without exception are bidden to come to him. The resources of God are infinite, and whosoever will may take of the water of life. There is a divine heredity as well as a human; and the fatherhood of God can set right all aberrations arising from human fatherhood. The disciple of Buddha looks forward to unknown ages of entanglement with an evil past; but Jesus Christ undertakes to free men from the law of sin and death. He alone can speak the word of deathless hope and almighty power to the morally lame and deaf and dumb and blind of our race.

Finally, we find the same supremacy of Jesus Christ in the matter of social regeneration. From the standpoint of experience it is very far from clear what the future of the race will be. Malthus portrayed a crowded earth with hunger and famine as the end. The struggle for existence readily lends evil dreams.

The physicists now and then tell us the universe itself is growing effete and must yet wear out. Certainly, it is far from sure that we are not using up the physical capital on which civilization depends. But apart from these dismal predictions and reflections, we find many forces at work in civilization which would suffice for its destruction if left to themselves. The wisest statesman can see but a little way, and his power is far less even than his knowledge. Humanity is driving stormily on its perilous way, and no man knows from history or observation what the end will be. If we really think about the subject, the only reassuring thing is the optimistic teaching of Jesus Christ based on his revelation of God. If God be indeed such as Jesus reported, if he be our God and Father, if his name is Love, if he has made man for immortal life and blessedness with himself, then of course all must be right with the world, and the end must be divine. But on any other view, the only preservative against deep anxiety, if not despair, is simply not to think. The God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ can be trusted even when we do not understand him; but if we seek to know God apart from his Son, we are at the beginning of confusion and sorrow.

It is a grim scene which the historical procession of humanity presents — the many races, their alienation, their wars and mutual slaughter, the failure to reach anything in most cases, and the scanty and insecure result in all. The great mass of individuals have not had the conditions of a properly human existence — buried in ignorance, pursued by disease, persecuted by pain, and all the while, like some tremendous Niagara, pouring over into the abyss of death and darkness. We are fascinated and almost paralyzed by the awful spectacle. What does it all mean — these fearful methods, this silence and indifference, this apparent traversing of all our ideas of justice and mercy? Is there any justifying outcome? Jesus Christ bids us trust God and fear not. Love and wisdom rule, and we shall yet see it when the day breaks and the shadows flee away. Others have echoed his words, but his

is the only original voice which commands our conviction and establishes our faith.

Now that these things are so, I am profoundly convinced. Jesus, instead of becoming less and less necessary to humanity, is more and more necessary. Our problems are larger, more pressing, more insistent to-day than ever before. Past times were in comparison times of childhood. And the solution of our problems is hopeless without the light thrown upon them by Jesus Christ. The question which Peter asked in his first dim insight into the supremacy of his Lord, the disciple of to-day repeats with all the added emphasis of nearly two thousand years of history: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

II

RELIGION AND LIFE

II

RELIGION AND LIFE

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. — *Romans* 12: 1.

In the preceding part of the epistle Paul has unfolded the divine plan for the salvation of men; he now proceeds to sundry practical deductions. And he begins with an exhortation based upon the tender compassions of God which he has been describing, and urges his readers to offer themselves in living sacrifice to God. But a word of explanation is needed to bring out the full force of the passage.

The phrase "reasonable service" but poorly translates Paul's meaning. We commonly take it to signify a duty which it is fitting we should recognize. It is meet and right and hence our bounden duty. Our "reasonable service," then, is a duty toward God which we ought to perform. Of course, every such

duty is a "reasonable service" in this sense, but still this is not what Paul meant or said. The word translated service properly means religious worship, as indeed the word service often does in English. We say, service will be held, meaning a meeting for worship. The word translated service here is *latreia*, the word which appears in idolatry, the worship of idols; Mariolatry, the worship of Mary; bibliolatry, the worship of a book, etc. And the reasonable does not mean here something right or fitting, but rational or spiritual. Paul was writing to persons many of whom were familiar with the Jewish ritual, and all of whom were living in the midst of idolatrous rites and practices, and he wished to show the superiority of the Christian life and worship by contrast with these other forms. The other sacrifices, whether Jewish or heathen, he regarded as dead, irrational, unspiritual. The Christian sacrifices should be living, rational, spiritual. The Jews and the heathen offered up the bodies of slain animals; the Christian should offer up himself in living sacrifice in

all the contents and details of his life. The body here stands for the entire personality. It is a convenient and picturable putting of the matter, and also serves to show that the details even of the physical life are to be included in our religion. The idea here is the same as when Paul urges us, whatsoever we do, whether we eat or drink, to do all to the glory of God. And this offering up of life as a whole in living sacrifice to God was to be their rational and spiritual worship, in distinction from the dead, irrational, unspiritual worship of the non-Christian world.

Now we see the apostle's thought. He would have us conceive of the world as a temple in which men perpetually offer up the daily life as their spiritual worship of God. The life itself is to be the material of religion; and when it is offered up in the filial spirit of loving obedience, it is our religion, our worship. Dead sacrifices, or the sacrifice of dead things, cannot please the living and holy God; but when life itself is offered up in continual consecration and devotion, it becomes that true

worship of the spirit, in the spirit, which alone is well pleasing unto him.

This exposition gives us our subject: The religious value of daily life. And by the daily life I mean this complex round of labor and rest, of waking and sleeping, of eating and drinking, of family and social interests, and all the multitudinous activities which spring out of human nature and which are necessary to keep the world a-going. What is the religious value of these things, and what is their relation to religion? The text has already told us. They are to be done to the glory of God by being subordinated to his will; and when they are thus offered up in living sacrifice to God, they become our religion, our spiritual worship.

On this general subject of the relation of life to religion there are three views more or less explicitly recognized in religious thought — the worldly view, the ascetic view, the Christian view.

The peculiarity of the worldly view is that it stops with the daily life and fails to relate

it to any divine meaning or plan. It discerns no spiritual life to which the daily round should minister, no supreme good which glorifies that round by relating it to God's will and purpose. Thus life itself soon becomes degraded, and sinks to its physical dimensions. The Gentile question, what shall we eat, drink, and wear, becomes the great if not the only question. Then life becomes mainly an affair of eating, drinking, and dressing, varying of course in grossness or refinement in different classes of society, but essentially the same in all. The life of animalism may be found everywhere in society, differing only in the form of its manifestation, but not in its principle. And this life quickly develops into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

Thus a blindness to the higher goods of life is developed or made chronic, and a sad inversion of right judgment is reached. In this view there is no sense of real values. Things which minister to animal sensation or to personal vanity are made the supreme goods of

life. Men lose themselves in their accidents, in things which at the utmost have only a temporary convenience, without any significance whatever for manhood here or hereafter. Men forget themselves, their real selves, entirely, and pride themselves on the most ludicrous externalities. They confuse themselves with their surroundings, and judge themselves, and are judged by others, according to their surroundings. Oftentimes the person himself disappears entirely from our thought in the contemplation of the surroundings. He becomes only a form for the exhibition of clothing or a tag or label for property. The way in which this illusion haunts us is at once pathetic and grotesque.

The man forgets himself and others also forget him; only the property is thought of. If we should ask how much some one is worth, only money values would be considered. What the man might be worth to God or men, what he counts for in humanity's struggle, to what spiritual values he has attained — these things are never dreamed of. And the same thing

continues when the man dies. Here, again, our attention is fixed on the property. How much did he leave? What will the heirs do with it? These and similar questions occupy our minds, with not a single thought of the soul that has left it all and gone out on its mysterious way to a world where only real values are recognized.

One with an eye for real values can discern many scarecrows like that of which Hawthorne somewhere writes, parading in unconscious masquerade under the solemn stars and before the watching angels; small minds and smaller hearts disguised by showy circumstances, and hideous mental and spiritual squalor hidden in fine surroundings.

Such is the worldly view of life and such its tendency. And when its devotees have been disillusionized, as commonly happens if they live long enough, they become cynics; that is, worldlings who have found the world out but have found nothing else to take its place. For the world passeth away and the lust thereof. It cannot long satisfy the soul;

only God can do that. No one knows better than the sated worldling that it would profit nothing to gain the whole world.

The ascetic view of life arises as a revolt and protest against the worldly view. It comes about as follows: The great body of temptations arises in connection with one phase or another of daily life. The physical nature is a fruitful source of temptation. Family life, social life, the life of trade, every form of human activity is attended with temptation and peril. In addition, most of these things have no lasting or valuable goods to offer. Their joys soon fail. Seeing their danger and scanty value in any case, seeing also how completely they often submerge the higher nature of men, let us abandon the daily and outward life so far as possible, and in holy retirement therefrom cultivate the spirit.

This view has made deep marks on history. It is by no means confined to the Christian world; indeed, its greatest manifestations have been in non-Christian lands. In India and China it has produced swarms of world-re-

nouncers. In the early Christian times it filled Egypt and Syria with hermits and anchorites, and in later times built up the great monastic institutions of the medieval church. Nor are traces of it lacking among ourselves. We see it in the distinction of secular and religious. We see it in the false notions of spirituality which pervade popular religion. We are willing to allow that life may be controlled by religion, but still we let it appear that we think it detracts from religion. The ideal would be complete retirement from life and all its secular interests to engage in voiceless adoration and unceasing worship.

But we must suppose God's supreme purpose in our lives is our spiritual development; and hence we cannot suppose that he has placed us in a life the great forms and needs of which are opposed to our best life. Such a thought would be impiety. This ascetic conception is intelligible as a revolt against the worldly view, but it is no less mistaken and pernicious. The great forms of life are not the outcome of sin, but of our constitution and of

the nature of things; and these in turn are the ordinance of God. The entrance of the millennium would change the spirit of human living, but not its essential forms. Hence any religion possible to us here must find its place in the world as God has made it, not by getting out of it, nor by withdrawing from it, but by transforming it with the filial spirit, and thus making life itself our religion and our spiritual worship.

This brings us to the Christian view, which recognizes the truth in the other views and reconciles them by uniting them in a higher view. The truth in the worldly view is that the life that now is, with all its interests and activities, is a matter of prominent concern. Christianity completes this view by bringing the life that now is into relation to eternal life, and thus gives it a significance which it does not have in itself. The truth in the ascetic view is that the worldly life by itself is a poor and mean thing, and that only spiritual goods have abiding value. Christianity adopts this truth, but corrects the error of supposing that

life as a divine ordinance is common or unclean, and that spiritual goods can be obtained apart from life rather than in and through the discipline which life affords.

Worldliness, in the religious use of the term, is not the being occupied with secular things. It is rather a spirit, a temper, a way of looking at things and judging things. The worldliness is not in the work, but in the spirit of the worker; and it may be manifested in connection with any kind of work. Worldliness can penetrate even into prayer and preaching, and the most sacred work can be done in a worldly spirit. In like manner the Christian life does not consist in doing formally religious things, though these have their place, but in the filial spirit which should pervade all doing and all days and all life in all its interests. Whatsoever the Christian does, he is to do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to man. And this living in all things unto the Lord is his religion.

The questions of the Gentiles press equally on both the Christian and the worldly man. What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and

wherewithal shall we be clothed? But the Christian does not rest in this sense-life. He relates it to a divine purpose and seeks to glorify it by bringing into it the courage, the dignity, the honor of a child of God. Life is not irreligious, but it needs to be subordinated to the Christian spirit; and in and through this life we are to realize ourselves and glorify God.

In the Christian view, then, life with all its interests is the field of the Christian spirit; and life with all its forms and interests is the ordinance of God. And the part of Christian wisdom is to accept it as God's gift; as the means by which he is exercising us in the essential virtues of the kingdom, humility, trust, obedience, unselfishness, and also the means by which he is developing us into larger and larger life, and by testing our faithfulness in a few things fitting us to become rulers over many.

There are still traces among us of the notion that religion is a round of formal rites and observances, and concerns itself mainly, if not

exclusively, with exercises of technical devotion and worship, such as prayer and church attendance. We still hear echoes of the ascetic disparagement of wealth, learning, culture, science, art, and the myriad activities of civilized life as irreligious or hostile to religion. But such a view is to make religion only one interest among many, and by no means the most important. Religion becomes universal and supreme only as it is made a principle which controls all living, and is not limited to any one phase of life.

Now the great forms of human life and interest are the conditions of a large human life, and are included, therefore, in the divine plan for men. Least of all are they to be viewed as sinful or as the outcome of sin in any way. They are founded in our constitution and our relations to things, and will be necessary as long as this constitution remains, even if the millennium should come. If the millennium came to-morrow the work of the world would have to go on just the same. All that would be eliminated would be the evil will and

the results which flow from it. Education, trade, transportation, farming, mining, the manifold productive industries of the world, the administration of government — all would go on, or civilization would perish. These are absolutely necessary conditions of any large human life as we are at present constituted; and man could not be man without them. Not less trade, but more conscience is the need of society; not less production, but a finer spirit in both producers and consumers. We need not less knowledge, or wealth, or taste, but far more of all of them, and all of them used for the enlargement and upbuilding of men. God's will concerning us involves activity in all these lines, an activity beyond anything yet attained, but it also involves the subordination of all these activities to the spirit of love and righteousness. And the Christian spirit, instead of withdrawing from this life, is to move out into it and possess it — into the great institutions of humanity, the family, the school, the state, and build them into harmony with the will of God. Thus the

kingdom of God and the kingdom of man, which are essentially the same, will come.

Nothing which I have said is to be understood as denying the importance of the formal exercises of religion. There is indeed a suggestion in the fact that the Revelator in describing his vision of the New Jerusalem says, "And I saw no temple therein"; but such a condition is not possible on earth in our present stage of development. Still it must be said that these formal exercises are not religion. At best they are only one phase and manifestation of religion, and sometimes they are not even that. But the religion is in that filial attitude of the spirit which in all things seeks to do the will of God; and this is manifested quite as really and religiously in the daily life as in the sanctuary. Again, if we define the Church as the organization for public religious worship, for religious instruction, and the administration of religious ordinances, then we must say that it is only one of God's instruments. By far the larger part of God's work upon and for humanity lies outside of

the Church, in the great institutions of the family, the state, the school, and in the great ordinance of labor. By and through these things, also and preëminently, as well as through the Church, God is disciplining and building men into life. The Church is the highest institution, but by no means the most important.

Now in this Christian view of life and its religious value we have a wholesome doctrine and one very full of comfort. We need this doctrine to broaden religion and keep it sane and sweet. Religion without the balance of the secular life tends to become narrow and silly, or fanatical and dangerous. This is abundantly shown by the course of religious history. God's method of building men by the discipline of daily life is far better than anything men have devised. The most dreadful caricatures of both sainthood and humanity have been produced by the ascetic and other-worldly inventions of good men. The only way to keep religion sane is to come out of the cloister and out of all supposed holy

withdrawal from the world, and set ourselves on the positive task of bringing in the kingdom of God, or of making God's will rule in all our human relations. The world has little need of technical saints or of holy hermits, but it has great and crying need of good men and women everywhere, in the family and in the community, in trade, in politics, in art, in literature, — men and women who can be trusted and who will stand everywhere and always for the things that are good and true and pure, and against all things whatsoever that are opposed thereto. One great need of the piety of our time is to overcome its narrow and abstract individualism, with its selfish scheme of salvation, and see that Christianity aims to bring all things into obedience to Christ. It redeems not merely the individual man, but all his activities, relations, and institutions; and not until this is done will the triumph be complete. The renewed man must reveal himself in a renewed society, renewed in all factors and details. Along with the new heaven must go the new earth. And the man who

does not hold himself responsible in the measure of his influence for bringing in the new earth may rest assured that he will have no part in the new heaven.

This Christian view is needed to redeem life from contempt. Our earthly life, apart from some divine meaning which is being realized in it and through it, is petty and wearisome, and not worth living. Nerves soon grow irresponsive, and the sensibility becomes jaded. Success itself soon palls on the earthly plane, so that even for earthly success the end is vanity. Hence it is that persons living on the worldly plane so often grow tired of life and become cynics and pessimists. The only relief is to transform life by the power of Christian faith and principle. We cannot get clear of it; we ought not to wish to get clear of it; but we can live it unto God. To see this, to realize it, to live it, — this is the sum of Christian wisdom.

III

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE AND ITS PRACTICAL SOLUTION

III

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How can these things be? — *John* 23 : 9.
What is that to thee? Follow thou me. — *John* 21 : 22.

THE question of Nicodemus referred to the new birth; but it is equally the question we all ask concerning the mysteries of life. The question of our Saviour was originally a rebuke and an admonition to the misplaced curiosity of Peter, but it is equally a rebuke and an admonition to the perennial questioning of the human mind concerning the ways of God. We are reminded that these things are not our affair, and that our duty is to take up the life of obedience, instead of losing ourselves in problems which are beyond us. My subject, then, is: The mystery of life, and the solution in practical obedience.

First, some words as to the mystery.

If we were asked what kind of world a God

all-wise, good, and powerful would make, we should promptly reply, A perfect world, a reflection of his wisdom and goodness, something manifestly divine. If then we should compare this thought with the real world, we should find very little agreement. Almost nothing would be as we expected; and our amazement and astonishment would increase with each advance of knowledge.

First, the history of the inorganic world amazes us. We pass backward through the æons of geology and ascend through the longer cycles of astronomy. We find immeasurable periods of eddying fire-mist, of slag and flame, of mud and slime, of lifeless shores washed by lifeless seas. We watch the slow-moving pointer on the astronomic and geologic dial only to discern that past time seems to have been mainly taken up with these lifeless periods. And we wonder to what purpose this slow and roundabout method. Did God take pleasure in that lifeless world? Was there some hidden obstacle in God which prevented a speedier attainment of his purpose? How

utterly the problem is beyond us. The inorganic world presents a thousand questions and answers none.

And when we reach the world of life again, what a surprise. We conceive it as a work of divine wisdom, but we gaze on seaweeds and fungi, on shapeless and hideous monsters, on revolting forms of all kinds. How little of this ancient and modern life has any obvious meaning. Meaning, indeed, there is; these things must have their place in the divine plan; but it is altogether hidden from us. For the great bulk of things that have lived, or that live, we see no manifest purpose. They seem to contribute nothing to the perfection of the universe. The whole army of fungi and parasites and caterpillars and grasshoppers and locusts could be dispensed with without any apparent damage to the world. Microbes and bacteria, fever germs and mosquitoes, what divine purpose or perfection do they set forth?

In much of this, I said, we discern no purpose; but when we can discern one it often

seems to make matters worse. Claws, fangs, and venom are fixed institutions of the world, and are perfectly adapted to their fell work. The arrangements for propagating disease are exquisite. The death-dealing instruments of nature are superb. The animal world is a scene of rapine and blood. If only the higher forms of life were nurtured by the lower this might seem permissible, but often enough it is just the other way. The higher forms succumb to the lower. The useful plant is killed out by the weed. The fruit-tree is destroyed by an insect or microscopic spore. The wheat-field is ravaged by a bug, contemptible in itself, but irresistible in the mass. Disease germs creep forth from every corner to destroy human life. A mildew, a blight, a drought, — and famine and pestilence follow in their wake. The organic world, like the inorganic, suggests a thousand questions and answers none.

But these are questions of curiosity rather than of practical interest. The matter grows more serious and the darkness deepens when we come to the human world. For now we

reach a realm where a moral meaning is possible and where we expect to discern some worthy end and outcome of creation. But to our dismay the moral meaning is but dimly seen, and the moral aim appears to be largely ignored. Consider the main facts of human history; what a fearful image they present: the many races, their reciprocal enmities, their unending wars, their mutual massacre; how wave after wave of slaughter has rolled again and again over the face of the earth. Confusion, blood, and the noise of conflict are ever about us as we trace the history of men. Note too the degradation of most races and the scanty attainments of the best. How men have wandered in error and darkness! How their minds have been blinded by ignorance and superstition! How they have been shut in by massive necessities which could not be escaped! And the races which have attained to some development, how soon and how utterly they have lost it. Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Northern Africa, Western Asia, Southeastern Europe illustrate. In fact, there has

been no proper history for most human races, but only an aimless and resultless drift. No ideas, no outlook, no progress, only animal wants and instincts largely unsatisfied — this sums up the history of the vast majority of human beings who have lived and who live to this day. In the face of such murderous and despair-provoking facts how can we say that God doeth all things well?

So much for the general facts of history. Let us look now at the life of the individual. Consider first the general form of our life, with its necessary prominence of the physical and animal. There seems to be something almost grotesque in this utter subjection of spiritual beings to animal needs. Most of our thought and effort has to be given to the supply of our ever-recurring physical wants; and the great mass of men have to spend their lives in a hard and exhausting struggle for bread. And not only are we subjected to animal needs, but we are strangely bound even in the highest life by physical conditions. Some organ is disordered, some nerve refuses

its function, some slight change in the chemistry of the body, and the moral life is distorted or destroyed. We believe that we are the children of God, and yet we find ourselves in the closest alliance with the animal world, subject to the same general laws of existence, birth, labor, hunger, pain, all soon ended by what, from the standpoint of our high spiritual claims, can only appear as a humiliating and sinister anticlimax, the universal fact of death.

Consider too the uncertainty of the individual life and lot, the apparent accidents of health and fortune, the many turnings and overturnings in which we can discern no plan or justifying outcome, the things that have impressed men with the sense of a blind fate or blinder chance which sports with men, and by which our best plans are thwarted or brought to naught. If these things followed lines of moral desert, we should find some satisfaction in them, but this they rarely do. The writer of the Seventy-third Psalm describes the prosperity of the wicked and the

afflictions of the righteous; and the distress which came to him over these things has come to many another since. The oppressor and the oppressed, the wronger and the wronged alike in numberless cases have passed away and justice has remained undone. How often the good and useful are taken and the bad and worthless are left. The wise man dies even as the fool, and in spite of ourselves the cry is often wrung from us that all is vanity. It may be that we shall know hereafter; but most certainly we do not know now. God's ways in dealing with men are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. The deepest mystery enshrouds them all. We may believe that God doeth all things well, but we walk by faith, not by sight.

Thus the human world, both in its general historical form and in the facts of personal life, agrees with the inorganic and organic world in suggesting a thousand questions but answering none. And in the human world they are no longer questions of speculative curiosity; they are the keen, eager, insistent,

heart-shaking questions in which sometimes bitter and rebellious feeling bursts forth in angry explosion, or which at other times are but the articulated sobs and tears of smitten hearts, or the protests of our moral nature. If God be indeed good, we say, how can these things be?

Facts of this kind, of which I have given only a few specimens, constitute the problem of evil. They are the things we should not have expected in the world of a good God. And men have made very great efforts to explain them, but with very little success. Many things may be said in mitigation and palliation in a general way, but after all a great deep of mystery remains behind, to which our profoundest thought can find no key. This is especially the case with the problem of the individual life. A kind of tendency to righteousness and goodness in general may be discerned in things in general, but this commonly leaves the problem of the individual as dark as ever; and this problem is the only one of any real significance. This is

"the burthen of the mystery,
. . . the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world."

Here then we have the problem arising from the mystery and confusion of life; and rightly enough the question arises, How can these things be? We now turn to the answer, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Of course I am not now constructing a philosophic discussion or carrying on a debate with the unbeliever. I am talking from the standpoint of our Christian faith. And I note in the first place that this is not the answer of heartlessness. It is the answer of the parent to the child that would busy itself with problems beyond its range, and would postpone obedience to satisfy an ill-timed curiosity. It is also the answer of one who has given us all the light we need for the performance of our duty and for trust in him. With this understanding let us see how the facts are met.

I. The facts are recognized. We are not mocked by being told that there is no evil or pain in the world. Their presence is affirmed

and the mystery of God's providence is admitted. His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Righteousness and judgment are round about him. The word is, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Pessimism itself has never been elsewhere so powerfully stated as in St. Paul's declaration that the whole creation groans and travails in pain.

II. We are told that all is well and that we shall yet see it. In spite of mystery and misery, and "graves and ruins and the wrecks of things," the world is ever borne Godward. The present is only the beginning, and not the end. If we knew all we should see that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Now we see through a glass darkly, and then face to face.

III. God makes a revelation of himself and his gracious purposes which enables us to trust him when we do not understand him. In most respects the ways of God are quite as mysterious to us with the Bible as without it; and in some respects they are even more so.

All of the questions mere curiosity raises are ignored. But we get light on the point of supreme importance; namely, what God is and what his purpose is concerning men. Through the rifts in the thick-rolling clouds of mystery we discern the face of our Heavenly Father and Almighty friend. We see God bending in love and sorrow over humanity, and in an act of mysterious cost and pain giving his Son for our salvation. We know as little as before why things are as they are; but we know nevertheless that they work together for good to them that love God. We have no insight into the way in which God's love is working, but we know with St. Paul that nothing can separate us from the love of God or thwart his loving will — nothing, whether it be death or life, or things present, or things to come, or height or depth or any other created thing whatsoever. For if God be for us, who or what can be effectively against us?

We have, then, in the Scriptures, not a satisfaction of our curiosity, but a revelation of God and of our duties. And having made this

sufficient revelation of himself, sufficient to assure us of his goodness and grace and to enlighten us to our own duty, God demands our trust and obedience. He will satisfy no idle curiosity. He submits to no examination on our part, but with divine dignity demands that we leave the ordering of the universe to him and apply ourselves to our own work. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

And this is right. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God whom Jesus revealed, deserves our trust. All that we need to know is that almighty power and goodness and wisdom are on the throne of the universe; and this is our most assured Christian faith. And when this assurance is given, our duty of trust and obedience becomes most manifest. Both philosophy and religion unite in rebuking the impertinence and the impiety which would postpone obedience to satisfy curiosity, and which lose themselves in barren cosmic criticism while neglecting the immediate and obvious duties of life. Could anything well be more absurd than our complaint of a being

whom we believe to be infinitely wise and good? An atheist might say that he does not recognize any such being, and he is not absurd in his complaint of the order of things. But the Christian who believes in an all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving Heavenly Father, and yet complains of the divine ordering of the world, is simply childish. He is not a bad reasoner, he is no reasoner at all. He does not understand the implications of his own faith, but like a child wants this or that according to the whim of the moment, and cries if he does not get it.

Now in the first place this divine reserve is intellectually necessary because of the limitations of our intelligence. It is doubtful if we could understand the solution of these world problems even if it were revealed to us; for in concrete matters we can understand only that to which our own experience furnishes the key. A child cannot comprehend the measures and motives of mature life, owing to the lack of faculty and the necessary development. It neither has, nor can have, the experience

necessary to make mature life intelligible. Consider a child which should attempt to estimate its parents' goodness by the little whims respecting goodness which its own experience makes possible. It could only conclude that they were not good, because it would completely lack that insight into the truer and higher goods of life which is needed to make the parents' action intelligible. The child wishes to play, but it is sent to school. It finds study a burden, but it must bear it nevertheless. At every point it is met with restraints and compulsions which seem harsh and unloving. This we all understand in the case of the child. But whoever will consider our ignorance, the mystery which enwraps us on every side, our limited experience also and the scanty moral appreciation of the highest things in life, will see that this must largely be the case with us in our criticism of the divine order of the world, and the divine dealings with us. Morally we are children still, and we estimate the goodness of God by our childish standards.

It is but an extension of this thought when I add that this divine reserve is also morally necessary. A great part of our trouble with the divine order of life is due to our non-moral standards. We judge the goods of life by standards of sensuous comfort and worldly success, and God has a very different standard. We desire to be happy; God wishes us to be holy. We look at the outward appearance; God looketh at the heart. We look at the seen and temporal; God looketh at the unseen and eternal. We seek to make God the servant of our worldly ease and comfort, while he is seeking to make us his children, meet to dwell with him in light. A great many of our difficulties disappear when we occupy the divine standpoint and view things under the form of the eternal. God is not much concerned to make us any of the things which the natural man desires to be,—rich, prosperous, successful, as men count success. These are accidents which count for little in the eternal years. Hence the apparent indifference and even cruelty of the divine dealings with us. We set our heart

on things we may not safely have. We desire things which are of no essential moment or abiding significance. We seek to rest in an earthly paradise, while God is preparing us for a heavenly. Thus God's plans and ours are often at variance ; because we are not yet able to appreciate that he is preparing some better thing for us. But we gradually grow towards the insight. We ourselves have outgrown many of our earlier aims. We have not to go back a long way to reach the place where we smile at our earlier sorrows. We see that a great many things we once most ardently desired were idle, and that many of our disappointments were those of children. We turn from them with a smile and wonder how we could ever have been stirred by them. And this happens with all earthly objects as the world and the lust thereof pass away. We ourselves begin to see, if we live long, that all the universe could not finally satisfy the soul. This soul God has made for himself, and only God can satisfy it.

Again, the divine reserve is religiously nec-

essary. The deepest thing in religion is living trust and filial obedience; and how would this trust be possible unless there were mystery in life which compels us to venture on God? There must of course be reason in parental government, but the child that does not begin with trusting obedience, that must have everything explained to it before it will obey, is a sorry sight. Sadder still is his case who has not learned the lesson of trust in religion. No one knows what it is to walk with God in the deepest sense, who has not walked with him in the dark. Indeed the very darkness itself may become the source of some of our deepest experiences. It is a great experience to be in a mighty storm at sea, when we have full confidence in the captain and the vessel. As the ship goes ploughing resistlessly along through the deep night, driven by its heart of fire, and one hears the lookout crying, All 's well: the soul,

> "Into the consciousness of safety thrilled,
> Swells vast to heaven,"

and claims kindred with and triumphs over the forces of the storm. A similar but greater

experience is it when a storm comes down upon life's sea, and rayless darkness sets in, to know that the Great Captain is on board and to hear his voice across the storm proclaiming that all is well. Then and only then do we know the full meaning of that word, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

Thus, as men are made, an element of mystery is needed for the development of both the moral and the religious life. If the glory and majesty of the Divine were always shining full upon us, our human life could not go on at all. And if right were always immediately triumphant and rewarded, our moral freedom would be practically cancelled, and our loyalty to righteousness would disappear in the obviousness of the reward. We may say with Bagehot that "an unfeeling nature, an unmoral universe, a sun that shines and rain which falls equally on the evil and the good are essential to morality in a being free like man and created as man was."

Thus it is plain that both our duty and our

wisdom lie in obedience to and trust in God, rather than in criticism of his ways. The ordering of the world belongs to God; it is a much smaller task which falls to us. And if we reflect we shall see that our inquiry in this matter seldom arises from a desire to know more of duty or to become more effective and helpful in life, but from an idle curiosity and a desire to excuse ourselves from doing our own work. There is a deal of this idle criticism abroad. We hear it in conversation; we meet it in magazines. Popular literature is full of it. We wonder why things are as they are, but we do nothing to make them better. We are sure we could have given good advice, if we had been consulted in the original ordering of the world, but we never get beyond advice. And this thing is far from being either harmless or innocent. It leads us to overlook our own responsibility. Bad as the world may be, and far as it may fall below our lofty ideals, it would be a pretty fair world to live in if men began to love God with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. The good-

ness of the world, so far as it is God's work, consists in the possibility of being made a great deal better; and whether it shall be made better depends on us. The human world is perpetually what men make it. And what is most needed is not cosmic critics and speculators, but men and women who will begin right where they are to make better that part of the world for which they are responsible. Such men and women will seldom be pessimists. They will find their efforts divinely reenforced and supplemented; and the conviction will grow from more to more that God is in his heaven and in his world too. The doubts concerning God and his goodness and the wisdom of the providential order of things rarely come from those who are honestly busy in making the world better.

And this leads to a final reflection. Certainty in concrete things is a matter of life rather than speculation. This is one of the chief insights of modern philosophy; and this is especially true of religious certainty. It does not come through speculation, but through

trust and obedience. If we would have firm confidence in God and a deeper sense of his presence, we must obey him. We must order our lives according to his will and thus build ourselves up on this most holy faith. It is the meek whom he guides in judgment, and the meek whom he teaches his way. To the obedient heart, while the ways of God remain as dark as ever, they offer no practical difficulty. Trust has never been dependent on pleasant circumstances, and pessimism is never born of simple trouble. The song of thanksgiving and devout gratitude has ascended from the couch of suffering and the home of want; and God's goodness is often most clearly discerned by eyes that are filled with tears. The wail of pessimism, on the other hand, is often heard from the pillows of luxury and from those who have more than heart could wish. God finds his way to the faithful and loving heart not by speculation, but by self-revelation in the inspirations of the Spirit and the tender ministries of the Comforter. And with this divine help and cheer we can be reconciled to life,

can cheerfully wait until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

It is indeed a God of mystery with whom we have to do. Clouds and darkness are indeed about him. What questions throng upon us concerning our own lives and lot, concerning the order of human life and history in general, concerning the multitudes who seem never to have had a chance, the great dumb uncivilized world also with its accumulated horrors and woes, the state of the dead, and the future of the wicked. And how insoluble these questions are. But while it is a God of mystery with whom we have to do, it is equally a God of goodness. It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the God who so loved the world that he gave his Son to be our Redeemer. We are in his hands and we are safe; and all good things are safe. We need not trouble ourselves to justify him. When he wishes to be justified, he will justify himself. We leave all the inquiries that oppress us with him in the full faith that he knows and wills what is best. We trust him.

We trust him with our lives, with humanity, with the living and the dead, with heaven and hell. Meanwhile our immediate duty is to obey him, to set our own lives in the order of righteousness. And the life thus bent on doing the will of God and bringing in his Kingdom is never left in practical uncertainty concerning the wisdom and goodness of God. He that doeth the will of God it is who knoweth of the doctrine; and only his judgment is just in these matters who doeth not his own will, but the will of the Father in Heaven.

If, then, we have been idly curious concerning the ways of God, to the neglect of our own duty, let us take the Master's rebuke to our hearts. The ordering of the world is not our affair, but only the doing of the work given us to do. Let us remember that we have a Master to whom we must give an account respecting our own faithfulness. Or if we have been oppressed by the mystery and the burden of life, let us also leave these fruitless and harassing questions for the present, and let us more faithfully abide in the life of obedi-

ence and trust. Thus we shall come to the conviction that we are in our Father's hands, and that he is doing all things well. In this faith we can live in good cheer until we pass beyond the night and know as we are known.

IV

RIGHTEOUSNESS THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

IV

RIGHTEOUSNESS THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? — *Micah* 6 : 8.

In the religious history of mankind in general there has been little connection between religion and righteousness in the ethical sense. Even the Jewish church was slow in reaching the conception of personal and moral righteousness as the central thing in religion. For a long time legal and ritual righteousness was the main thing, rather than holiness of heart and life. The prophets were the earliest preachers of spiritual religion. They saw that God looks at the heart, and that what he supremely desires is the inward loyalty to righteousness. Everything else is instrumental to this. But there is always a tendency with the mechanically and unspiritually minded to mistake the forms and adjuncts and rites and

ceremonies of religion for religion itself, and to rest in them. This happens in our own day; the religious thought and life of many centre in the externals of religion; and all the more it happened in the times of ignorance of the ancient church. Hence the prophets had as one of their burdens to oppose this tendency and to set forth the spiritual nature of God's demands. One Psalmist sings, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire. Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God." Isaiah represents God as wearied with sacrifices. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," according to Samuel. "The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart." "Cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." These are Jehovah's demands as Isaiah understood them. Amos has the same strain. "Hate the evil and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate." The fast which God has chosen is "to loose the bands of wickedness,

to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free." Micah, also, in one of the greatest utterances in the Bible, sums up God's demands in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. This was an absolute break with the cruel idolatries of his time, with their Moloch-worship, and self-immolation; and it remains a most illuminating utterance even for our time. It might be called the Magna Charta of spiritual religion.

Micah's statement might be paraphrased as follows without altering its essential meaning: Religion in its essence is righteousness and good-will toward men and reverent humility and obedience toward God. And this, as we have seen, is no lonely utterance of this prophet; it is the underlying idea of both prophetic and apostolic teaching, as well as of the teaching of our Lord. And this is the theme I wish to expound and enforce. Whatever our theological faith, whatever our religious practices, and whatever our religious pedagogics, their sole use and value consist in helping us to lives of love and righteousness

before God and man. This is that for which they exist and that which gives them meaning and justification. A resolute holding fast to this principle will clear up many things which in popular religious thought are now confused.

The religious history of the church is a very complex matter; and the views current at any time are seldom thoroughly intelligible apart from the history which has produced them. They do not express the fact in its simplicity, but the fact as it has been modified and perhaps distorted by the one-sided men who have dealt with it. This is also the case with the conceptions of personal religion which obtain in our individualistic churches to-day. They are quite as much products of a history as expressions of the essential fact. They are the outcome of theological debates concerning human nature, original sin, native depravity, natural goodness, etc. They are also the outcome of debates concerning state churches and sacerdotal proxyism, mechanical and spiritual religion, individual or churchly responsibility, salvation by faith or by works. All of

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these things have affected our conception of personal religion, so that with many the typical conception of religion is not to be gathered from Christian living, but from catechisms and books of doctrine. They aim to experience theology rather than religion.

There is still another thing which has greatly confused popular religious thought; and that is the current form of speech according to which religion is something to be got. In this form of speech in its various modifications religion is tacitly regarded as a mysterious something, distinct from righteousness, which in some way is to be got; and the difference between the moral man, in the sense of the righteous man, and the religious man, is that the latter has got religion, while the former has not. Hence, if one would become religious, it is not sufficient that the wicked should forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and turn unto the Lord,—that would be mere morality; he must in addition "get religion." And as no one can give a very clear account of what this getting reli-

gion is, or what the religion is which is to be got, in distinction from holy living, the matter grows more and more mysterious the more it is talked about. If the demand were simply that we should do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God, it might indeed be difficult to meet it; but it would be intelligible. We know what justice and mercy and seeking to do God's will mean; there is no mystery about them and need be no confusion. But the demand is thought to be more than this; we must "get religion," it is said; and thus popular thought is confused again. And the confusion is further increased by the fancy that the possession of this mysterious something is revealed by some peculiar experience, generally of an emotional type, in which the fact declares itself. This adds an additional element of mystery and confusion. Instead of remaining in the open day of righteousness and obedience to God's commandments, we are set to groping in the obscure labyrinths of emotional psychology, looking for we know not what. As a result

of all these misconceptions, it is very rare to find inquirers and even church members who have attained to the prophet's insight into the simplicity of God's demands upon us.

There is great need of getting down to first principles in this matter; indeed, there is no other way of escaping the traditional and current confusions on the subject, confusions resting, as said, upon a polemical theological history rather than a first-hand experience and impartial study of the facts. And I would propose as a first step toward clearness that we cease talking about religion as something to be got, and indeed that we cease talking about religion at all. In fact, we are not called upon to be religious; we are under no obligation whatever to be religious; there is nowhere any commandment to have religion. We are called upon to be righteous, and to fear God and keep his commandments. And these phrases about getting and having religion have so little definite meaning in themselves, and so readily lend themselves to confusion and misunderstanding, that we shall

do well to replace them by other forms of speech which shall clearly express the reality in the case, namely, the righteous life. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" All this is intelligible to every one. It may be difficult to do this, but it is easy to see what is to be done. Dropping this phrase about getting and having religion, and using the prophet's language instead, would greatly clarify our thought. It would also make less easy the evasion of righteous living on the part of professors of religion which sometimes scandalizes both the world and the church. Many persons are found who claim to have religion, but it is no security for right living. They have religion, but you cannot trust them. They have religion, but their word is worth nothing. They have religion, but that is no

security against all manner of insincerity and meanness. They have religion, but they lack that simple integrity which is the basis of all noble character. It is really an open question whether the ethics of religious persons is notably better than the ethics of others of the same opportunities and social standing, or whether, if there be any difference, it is due to their religion. One does not always find church members, or even ministers, peculiarly trustworthy in business, or delicately scrupulous in matters of veracity, or especially averse to underhand measures for carrying out their plans. This is not commonly due to hypocrisy, but it is at least partly due to the mistaken separation of religion and righteousness; to the fancy that religion is something which can be had or got, something the possession of which, like a kind of talisman, distinguishes the possessor from all others and marks him off as religious. We shall always be exposed to this sad caricature, if not hypocrisy, until we see that in Christian thought there is no such thing as having religion apart from

righteous living, or that true religion in God's sight is nothing but righteous living in the love of man and God.

Let us repeat then, with the ancient prophet, that the sum of God's demands is to live justly, to love mercy, and to walk in humility before him. When one is summoned to the religious life he is not called to anything mysterious and unintelligible, but to something level to every mind. He is called to live a life of justice and mercy among men. He is called to relate his life to God's will and walk in filial reverence before him. So much and nothing more; but also so much and nothing less. Whatever mystery there may be in religion lies elsewhere, but this central aim and meaning is sun clear. And this spiritual religion is not a mysterious something to be got, nor a secret talisman to be possessed. It is simply a perfectly intelligible manner of living, to be acquired and practiced and made habitual by the divine help; not to get something, but to live in the spirit and practice of justice and mercy and reverent submission and obedience to the

will of God. We must hold fast to this as the one fixed point with which all our thinking on personal religion must begin, and from which it must never depart. This is the central aim and meaning by which every religious profession and system must be tested. And whatever our theological apparatus or body of doctrine, or devotional helps and practices may be, they all should have for their end the production of this righteous living and God-revering life. This is that which God supremely desires for men, not sacrifice and offering, not rites and ceremonies, but holiness of heart and life; and all the work of God's spiritual kingdom is directed to procuring this result. Any conception of religion which does not include this aim as its essential feature, or which subordinates it to anything else whatever, is a caricature or contradiction of Christianity.

If, then, any one would locate himself with reference to God's kingdom, let him not ask himself whether he has religion. That is a question of no importance. It is no matter whether he has religion or not. Neither let

him ask himself concerning his religious emotions. That is equally an irrelevant question. Emotions are no guide whatever to character. They depend on temperament, time of life, and are profoundly implicated in our physical conditions. A prominent physician once said he had never known a case of triumphant death when the disease was located below the diaphragm. But let the inquirer in all solemnity ask himself whether he is seeking to please God by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly before him; whether in life and set purpose he is on the side of God, and of the things which are pleasing in God's sight. This question goes to the root of the matter, cutting through all illusions and hypocrisies, and infallibly locating every one, either as a worker of righteousness and child of the kingdom, or as a worker of iniquity and child of the devil. He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil. This was St. John's verdict.

Thus I have sought to bring out into clearness the aim in religion so that no one need

wander in darkness as to what God requires of him, and also so that no one may mistake anything for religion which does not aim at righteousness as the essential thing. And this we should bear in mind both in our judgments of ourselves and in our guidance of others. This will not indeed remove all difficulties, but it will remove those which rest on misunderstanding and lead to misdirected effort. I must now proceed to remove various misconceptions which may already have sprung up in some minds. Thus it may be urged that I have said nothing about the need of divine help and the atonement and the forgiveness of sins and faith and salvation and the worthlessness of our good works, and have set up a scheme of mere morality which ignores all the essential features of the Gospel. It would not be strange if such objections occurred to many minds from failure to distinguish between religion and theology, or between the religious aim itself and the conditions of realizing it.

Now nothing that I have said denies, or is intended to deny, our need of divine help

in the religious life. I have simply sought to set forth the aim of that life. The aim is righteousness, Godlikeness, holiness of heart and life. In securing this aim the divine help is most assuredly needed. I would accept all that any judicious theology has ever said about our dependence on God, or on the Saviour, or on the Holy Spirit for inspiration, for enlightenment, for power to become the Sons of God. I would equally accept all that might be said in repudiation of spiritual boasting and self-righteousness on our part. But this does not affect the fact that what we need this help for is to attain to righteous living. Even communion with God is for the sake of righteous living; and this communion is pre-eminently through righteous living. Any profession of divine communion which is unrelated to righteousness and does not lead to righteousness is a delusion and a snare. The friendship of the Lord is with them that fear him, but if any one regard iniquity in his heart the Lord will not hear him. What this divine help may imply and how it may be attained are separate

questions, belonging partly to theology and partly to religious pedagogics. On the divine side it may involve a special divine order and economy. On the human side it may involve prayer, various devotional exercises and religious practices according to the mental and spiritual development; but none of these things are ends in themselves. Their sole value consists in helping us to holiness of heart and life.

The atonement, also, is an important doctrine of theology, and, rightly conceived, is one of the great inspirations of religion. It is a statement of God's great love and condescension on our behalf, and is the supreme argument for love and obedience on our part. But it is not a scheme for excusing us from righteous living, as if God could now be content to have us live unrighteous and wicked lives. This interpretation is an ancient heresy which the church has always condemned. Whatever mysterious Godward relations this doctrine may have we decide not; but so far as conduct is concerned it is God's great

dynamic for helping us to lives of righteousness. It alters no moral principle and relaxes no moral demand. These are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, as changeless as God; and their obligation is binding forevermore. Hence this doctrine does not change the essential aim of religion, which is righteousness. Christ nowhere excuses his disciples from holy living, but rather makes the obligation more intimate and comprehensive than ever. Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, enters into the kingdom of heaven, but only he that doeth God's will.

The forgiveness of sins likewise is an important doctrine and one very full of comfort, but does not change the aim of religion, which is still and always righteousness. The forgiven sinner is not free to go and sin again; he is bidden to go and sin no more.

Faith likewise is no device for escaping the duty of righteousness. We are not saved by faith, but by grace; and faith is simply yielding ourselves up in self-surrender to the divine grace above us, which seeks our moral

purification and upbuilding. It is the very deepest and most active principle of obedience to God's will. Faith, if faith, must work, and it must work righteousness. Salvation, too, is essentially a salvation from unrighteous living, not from penalties only or chiefly. It is a gross misconception to think of salvation as anything but a salvation from sinning and a restoration to righteousness, and thus to God's favor.

A word from John Wesley may fitly come in here. In a letter to his brother Charles he says: "But of all preaching, what is usually called Gospel preaching is the most useless if not the most mischievous, a dull, yea, a lively, harangue on the sufferings of Christ or salvation by faith without sharply inculcating holiness. I see more and more that this naturally tends to drive holiness out of the world."

When we speak of the worthlessness of our good works much depends on the meaning. Good works may mean machine piety, as in ancient Pharisaism or mechanical rites of medieval religion. Such good works are worth-

less, of course. Or good works may mean external conformity to law without any heart in it. Such good works are likewise worthless, being mere legalism rather than righteousness. This is about what is meant by mere morality. But good works in the true sense of righteousness are such because of the heart put into them. They spring out of the love of righteousness and practical devotion to it. In this sense the more of them the better; in this sense they are the essential thing. To fear God and work righteousness is to be accepted of him. Hereby we know that we know him, that we keep his commandments. If any man say I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar and the truth is not in him.

While, then, the various doctrines dwelt upon are true and in their place important and even fundamental, they do not alter the fact that what God requires of us is ever and always and only righteousness of heart and life.

The life of man is a very complex thing,

and our human needs are many. The feeling of dependence and helplessness growing out of the vicissitudes of life and the inexorable necessities which wall us in on every side, the feeling of awe and fear springing out of the impenetrable mystery and uncertainties of our existence, the feeling of loneliness and orphanage also which sometimes comes over us in the deep silence of the universe, the heart wailing over and after its dead, the intellect seeking for knowledge, and the conscience hungering and thirsting after righteousness — all of these things enter into and determine the religious manifestations of humanity. The Christian teacher will always have to minister to more than the conscience of men. He must bind up the broken-hearted, strengthen the feeble will, and bring a message of hope and cheer and inspiration. I would not, then, be understood as saying that conduct or righteousness is the sum of religion. But I do say it is the sum of God's demands on us, and it is the central thing in our relation to God. Given this, our religious

life may unfold in various ways according to our special experience, or peculiar temperament, or the demands made upon us by our position in life; but without this all else is dust and ashes before conscience and before God. We are not children of the kingdom because we are filled with awe before the midnight heavens, or in some great cathedral, or at some magnificent religious service. We are not children of the kingdom because we are thrilled or melted by religious music, or delight in devotional exercises, or are emotionally moved by religious contemplation. All of these things are possible without one spark of loyalty to God or love to man. We are children of the kingdom, if at all, because we are bent on doing the will of God.

And the time has come for making this view prominent in the life of the church. The gradual development of intelligence and conscience has brought about the necessity for a readjustment in religion. The high-pressure emotional religion affected by the individualist churches of past generations is passing away.

The changed intellectual and moral atmosphere is fast making it impossible. Some who cannot discern the signs of the times are still striving to stir the old fervors, but the failure is becoming more and more abject. At the best we have galvanism rather than life, echo instead of a living voice. Men are growing tired of the hunt after emotions and of the barren inspection of their spiritual states. The world also is demanding fruit of religion and testing it by its fruits — fruits of enthusiasm for humanity and the bettering of the world. And this does not imply that men are becoming less religious, but that religion is taking on another and better form. And the line of progress lies in the direction of abandoning these unwholesome subjectivities and taking men out of their selfish schemes of salvation, and putting upon them the positive task of setting up and realizing the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of righteousness, upon the earth. If this be first and essential all other things will be added, and the religious life will become both sane and fruit-

ful. Emotions will spring from ideas and will be natural and unforced; and that air of unreality and artificiality which pervades so much religious speech will disappear.

It is often said that we need a "revival of religion." I quite agree if by this be meant a revival of righteousness, but I stoutly disagree if anything else be meant. We have religion enough of the sort that does not lead to righteous living, or that is a social fashion, or a matter of taste, or a sentimental contemplation, or an external form or ceremony. Holiness of heart and life is the great need of the world and the supreme demand of God; and the supreme aim of the church must be the building up of righteous character in its members and realizing righteousness in the community. After this is provided for we may consider the claims of taste and art and ceremony and liturgy; but until this is provided for, the church can only be an abomination unto the Lord and a scoff among thoughtful men.

I close by renewing a suggestion made early

in the sermon. It is that we cease talking about religion and talk about righteousness instead. Religion is a very complex thing, as complex and multiform as humanity. Historically, it belongs to the natural history of humanity, and like humanity itself, it needs to be moralized and spiritualized if it is to reach its perfect form. But, as before said, we are not called upon to be religious; we are under no obligation to be religious. There is no commandment anywhere to that effect. But we are called upon to be righteous, to fear God and keep his commandments, to love God and man; and a blessing is pronounced upon them that hunger and thirst after righteousness. This and this only is religion in the Christian sense. Religions are various; emotions change; piety is often parti-colored; but the set purpose to do the will of God is the same forever.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

"Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. If any man say,

I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

V

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

What I have to say upon this subject is the distinct teaching of no single text or set of texts; it is rather the outcome of Christian thought and history. I read, however, several texts, not so much as the foundations of my discourse as, rather, indications of the line of thought.

Thus, John 10: 16: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd." Here the universalism of Christianity appears. There are many sheep and many folds; but withal there is one flock and one shepherd.

Again, Acts 10: 34–35: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him." Here we have the declaration that righteous-

ness is righteousness everywhere, and everywhere and from every one is acceptable to God.

And finally, 1 Tim. 3: 15: "The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Here we have a suggestion of the great practical importance of the church.

The kingdom of God and the equivalent phrase, the kingdom of heaven, often have the same meaning as the church, in the New Testament use. In the gospels the kingdom is more frequently spoken of; in the epistles the church is the more common term. The kingdom is mentioned one hundred and twelve times in the gospels, and the church only twice. In the epistles the reverse is the case. The kingdom is rarely referred to, while the church is often spoken of. But both terms refer to the same spiritual society, in which the doing of God's will and the realizing of his gracious and righteous purposes, or the realizing the divine life in man and society, is the supreme aim. But these questions concerning the origin and relation of the terms need

not detain us. The kingdom was the original conception, but from the circumstances attending the spread of Christianity, the notion of the church became predominant. And now after many centuries other historical circumstances are carrying us back to the conception of the kingdom again as the basal and essential one. Churches are many; the kingdom is one. Churches at best are instrumental only, the kingdom is the supreme end itself. If the kingdom were here, we might not need the churches; but the churches without the kingdom would be a barren mockery. Hence it is that the conception of the kingdom is so fast replacing that of the church in the Christian thought of to-day. Let us now inquire first what the kingdom is, or what it aims to do.

When our Lord taught the disciples to pray, he put as the first petition, "Thy kingdom come"; and what this might mean is explained in the following words, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." In our unspiritual way of thinking we are apt to fancy that the coming of God's kingdom would be

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some sort of spectacular manifestation in the heavens above and the earth beneath, with all manner of scenic glories for the delight of wonder-loving minds, and with complete cessation of all need of labor. But such a performance at best would be only a celestial circus, and would be unworthy of God and damaging to men. The real coming of the kingdom would mean that men were loving God with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. This is what it would mean in principle. In application to this life it would next mean that this principle of love was being specified into the highest and completest forms of human life upon the earth, until man and society and all social and political forms and agencies and activities had been made perfect and brought into ideal completeness. Perfect love within must find perfect expression in the human world without. The principle of the kingdom is love, but the field of this love's manifestation is life; and this life must be built into ideal form. Mere good intentions alone would not suffice; for they

might be thwarted by ignorance, disease, social and industrial inefficiency, and a low grade of development in general. Love must be guided by right reason, and both must have a vigorous life behind them, or under their control.

Thus we escape the error of the unspiritually-minded who would find the kingdom in some mechanical and spectacular manifestation; and we also escape the error of those who would find the kingdom in the abstract salvation of abstract souls without any essential relation to the work and interests of the life that now is. The view set forth escapes both of these errors; and it is fast bringing both illumination and inspiration into Christian thought. There is no sign of the times more promising than this, that Christians are coming to see as never before their responsibility for the right ordering and development of the present life. Christian conscience and Christian energy are gradually turning to this field; and from this fact we may expect a more efficient form of religion than any we

have yet known. The Pharisee with his externalism, and John the Baptist with his ascetic detachment from life, will give place to the Son of Man, who sanctified all human duties and relations by importing heavenly principles into them, and who in all things was about his Father's business.

The kingdom is built upon the good news of God which our Lord first fully and finally proclaimed; and the aim of the kingdom is to realize the will of God. Thus there arises in our thought the conception of a great spiritual society, transcending earthly distinctions and above all political organizations, a society whose citizenship is forever in the heavens, being hid with Christ in God, yet whose present sphere of activity is upon the earth, and whose members are united in the high purpose of doing the will of the Highest, and thus bringing in the divine kingdom. Thus our thought stretches away to the great multitude that no man can number, who have passed into the heavens, but who still remain members of the society, and are still engaged in doing the will

of God. And then our thought rises to all the first-born sons of light, "the great Intelligences fair," who also belong to the kingdom and who know no higher law than the will of God.

Let us next inquire who are the members or subjects of the kingdom of God upon earth.

Traditional thought upon this subject is the outcome partly of traditional doctrines concerning the church, and partly of an abstract theological plan of salvation. The former gives us sacerdotalism, state churches, and religious mechanism in general. In this view the spiritual element is overlooked and nothing is left but magic and superstition. The other factor gives us an abstract order of salvation, to be followed with all the exactness of a statutory formula if we would enter into life. This view is as mechanical as the former, though in a different way. Both alike remain in the letter and grievously miss the spirit.

It was very natural, almost necessary, under the circumstances, that the kingdom should be confounded with the visible church. It required

some experience and some development of spiritual insight to discern the spiritual nature of the kingdom. Hence the very general conclusion that only church members belong to the kingdom; and hence again the very general idea that the conditions of church membership and the formal rites for admission to the church are necessary for admission to the kingdom of God. This gave rise to a swarm of notions, always grotesque and unspiritual and sometimes frantic and insane, respecting baptism and other rites, all of which notions rested at bottom on the fancy that God is a stickler for etiquette, and cares for little else in comparison. But such notions are fast disappearing as spiritual reflection deepens. Experience has shown that one may be a recipient of all the ordinances and at the same time have full membership in the synagogue of Satan; while others, like the Good Samaritan, who have not shared in the ordinances are yet disciples of Christ and children of God through the affinities of their spirits. Our Lord himself recognized this. He spoke of the tares

among the wheat, and also of the other sheep who are not of this fold, but who are nevertheless his sheep. He also said many should come from the East and West and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, while the nominal sons of the kingdom should be cast out. On another occasion he rebuked the disciples for interfering with an outsider who was doing good, and said, He that is not against us is on our part. Jesus thought of what the man was doing; and he saw that he was doing his kind of work, the work he himself would do. Peter also, in our second text, declares that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him. A portion of the Spirit, we are told, is given to every man to profit withal; and there is a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Here the teaching is plain that there is a work of grace that extends beyond the visible Christian limits, and there are sheep beyond the visible fold.

Membership in the kingdom, then, does

not depend on rites and ceremonies, nor even upon a knowledge of Christian truth, but upon the attitude and affinities of the spirit. Of course, that which is perfect in spiritual living cannot come until there is a knowledge of the Gospel. This alone gives the necessary illumination and inspiration; and we must seek to bring this knowledge to every one and to bring every one to the apprehension and appropriation of this knowledge. But the spiritual principle may exist apart from it. Those who not having the law yet do by nature the things contained in the law, those others in every Christian community who without being nominally Christians are yet doing the kind of work Christ wants done, and are working in his spirit, certainly belong to the kingdom. They may have come very imperfectly, or not at all, into the knowledge of Christian truth; they may not have attained to any reflective and conscious piety, and may thus need to be taught the way of God more perfectly, but they have the root of the matter in them because they are living in the Christ spirit. Surely the Good

Samaritan was a member of the kingdom. Of course he knew nothing of Christ, but Christ knew something of him. And with equal certainty the priest and the Levite were not members of the kingdom. They may have had high standing in the temple, but they had not the spirit of Christ. The Samaritan was an outcast from the temple, but he had the spirit of Christ. One must be mentally and morally debauched by a mechanical theology who can doubt that the Samaritan belonged to the kingdom and the others did not. The twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew is suggestive reading in this regard. It is the glory of Christianity that its spirit is transcending its own formal institutions. The Lord Jesus has many an unrecognized and unconscious disciple in lodges, in labor organizations, in industrial and social brotherhoods, in philanthropic and reform societies. And while he would bring them into a better knowledge of himself, he would not forbid them in any way the work they are doing. Thus the leaven, according to the promise, is leavening the lump.

Everywhere the letter killeth, but nowhere else has it been so sadly fatal as at this point. The unspiritually-minded have naturally sought some test of membership in the kingdom less exigent than the spirit of Christ; and the mechanically-minded have painfully scanned the letter in a mechanical way without penetrating to the spirit at all. But texts without the spirit only leave us in confusion; and when we have the spirit we can manage some things without texts. Who can enter into the thought of the Heavenly Father as our Lord revealed him, the God who loved and loves the world, and need a text to tell him that the babies are safe in his arms, that the lack of some external rite would not mean damnation, and that the heathen world is not turned over to indiscriminate perdition? And what shall we say of those other mechanical minds who in their fear of natural goodness hold that nothing is good in humanity until it acts in full view of the gospel plan and literally goes through the order of salvation with all the mechanical literalness of a recipe? That is not

the way our Father deals with us. We are in our Father's hands and heart; and he is bearing with us and training us to be his spiritual children. And goodness everywhere is good; and grace is ever at its source. When we rise to the full thought of Christianity, we can see that the whole world is under the government of the Father in the Son. The Son it is by whom are all things and for whom are all things. He is at once the source and goal of our life. The deeper we penetrate into the highest views of God and his purposes the better, neither can that which is perfect come until we have entered into some apprehension of the good news of the Gospel; yet we must hold that all true goodness is moving Godward, though men may be at different stages on the road, and may not know the origin or the goal of their movement. A vast amount of historical theology has drifted away, not because of better grammar and exegesis, but because the growing insight of the Christian community into the mind of Christ has made it impossible.

Thus we come to the conception of a great spiritual society of the children of God. It includes the good of every faith and age and clime, in this world or in any other. It includes all those who are in training for goodness; all in short but the children of disobedience. These are on their way to the outer darkness. But this kingdom is not always and everywhere manifested with equal clearness and power. The proclamation of the kingdom in its true nature and principles was first made by our Lord, and our thought of it centres around him. We may rightly say then that the kingdom first came on earth with him; for in comparison with his work and revelation the kingdom had not come before; and it comes now with any richness and fullness only in connection with him. Likewise in the individual life, while all goodness is divine and a mark of the spirit's presence, the life must become reflective and rise into self-conscious surrender to the highest before it can reach its ideal form; and this again is possible only in connection with the kingdom as our Lord has re-

vealed it. It has not been my purpose then, in extending the kingdom to take in goodness everywhere, even its embryonic and unconscious forms, in any way to deny the supreme preëminence of our Lord, or the importance of a knowledge of the Gospel for the development of the life of the kingdom.

We now pass to consider the relation of the visible church to the kingdom.

All things whatsoever stand in the all-enfolding love and fatherhood of God; and the essential aim of this love is to awaken filial love in return, that thus the divine love may bestow itself in endless blessing upon us. This implies a personal relation between the soul and God which can never be assumed by any one for any other. Before the kingdom can fully come in any soul, there must be this personal and filial response to the divine grace. Only thus can we fully possess the regenerate character and consciousness. No institution can do this work for us. No person can do it for us. Institutions may produce helpful conditions. Other persons may educate, influence,

persuade. But when all they can do is done, there remains the act of the individual himself, which alone can ratify and complete all that divine or human love and institutions have done or can do. The individual is the logical presupposition of the church as he is of the state. We might conceivably have holy men and women apart from any church, but a church without holy men and women would be either an abstraction or a synagogue of Satan.

All sacerdotal theories of the church are set aside by the spiritual nature and aim of Christianity. This aim is not to effect a mechanical and external salvation, but to produce a spiritual transformation so that Christ may be formed or reproduced in us. The church is not an end in itself, neither has it any magical or mysterious powers. It is purely instrumental for the interests of the kingdom or the believers that compose it, and its value lies solely in its service.

When in political science we speak of the government, we do not mean any particular

government, but the social organization for the control of individuals, so as to secure the best good of all. So when we speak of the church, we do not mean any existing ecclesiastical organization, but religious organization in general, which aims to unite and help men in the spiritual life. Now in the sense of organized religion the church is a most important institution with most important functions. As man is a social being, his religion must be social also. An unsocial religion, if it could exist, would be a triumph of selfishness, not of love. As men in coöperation are vastly more effective than working in isolation, so their religion must be coöperative for the greatest effectiveness. As the fusing of individual opinions into one great public opinion gives them vastly increased power and greatly strengthens the individual opinion itself, so the same process in the religious life gives our religious convictions multiplied force and efficiency. As in the nation men die, but institutions remain as the form and guarantee of the continuity of national life, so in the re-

ligious community an institution is needed to bind men together in a common aim and spirit, and to abide across the coming and going of the individuals, thus assuring the continuity of the religious life in the world. It is in facts of this kind that the church as the social organization of religion has its root and origin; and it appears as necessary under these circumstances as the analogous political organization of men. We need not much concern ourselves to find a technical and verbal warrant for either church or state. They are so manifestly founded in the nature of things, that they need no further foundation. As the individual cannot be himself apart from the state, so the individual in religion is helpless apart from the church. As the political individual in isolation could never put forth those great activities needed for the development and triumph of humanity, so the religious individual in isolation would be utterly inadequate to the great efforts needed for the conquest of the world for righteousness. For this there is needed organized and corporate work

for massing the isolated forces of individuals, and bringing them to bear in joint and abiding witness for truth and righteousness and in joint and abiding effort against untruth and unrighteousness in the world. If there were not a single text in Scripture on the subject, it would be no less necessary and no less divine than it is, as founded on the text of history and humanity. Thus it is that the church becomes the pillar and ground of the truth. It is the institution which brings the individual out of his isolation and weakness, and reënforces him by all those forces which root in the social nature. It is a perpetual testimony to the spiritual nature of man and his divine affinities, a relationship which the sense life is perpetually obscuring. It is the great teacher concerning the things of the spirit. Here the divine tradition of divine love is cherished and made credible. Here the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant meet together in the love of one Lord who is the Maker and Head of them all. Here too the spiritual forces of humanity centre.

Here is a great universal confederation for spiritual purposes, and, through them, for all other purposes that look to man's upbuilding, freed from limitations of race and nation and condition, and bound by a common love to a common work toward a common aim, and that the highest. Surely this institution is rightly called the pillar and the ground of the truth.

Both the church and the state are divine institutions in this sense, that they are manifestly necessary to the best life of man in their respective fields; and hence whoever rejects them shows at least a want of insight into human needs and conditions. This manifest fact of experience is as true and divine a warrant as any "Thus saith the Lord" could be. But a similar blunder has been committed in the case of each of these institutions. Because some form of social authority over the individual is a manifest necessity, hence a part of the divine order, it has been concluded that a given government exists by divine right, and that to resist it is to rebel against God. This fallacy held sway for a long time and is still cherished

by some royal families. It took several political revolutions to expose the logic. Again, it was held that these governments and governors having their commission to rule directly from Heaven, they were not responsible to any earthly powers. Accordingly the claim that all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed was viewed as a grave political heresy. Yet gradually it has become an article of political faith. We now see that the fact of social authority over the individual, which is the essence of government, is no warrant for this or that particular government, unless that government conserves the interests of the governed. We, the people, while recognizing the need for social authority, do not for a moment doubt our full right to criticise any actual government and to change it also so as to bring it into harmony with the best interests of all. Government is an ideal, and nowhere exists in its purity. Only concrete governments exist, and these often have a notable parallax with the ideal.

A similar error has existed with regard to

the church. Because some form of religious organization must exist for the conservation and expression of Christian truth and doctrine, for the education and reënforcement of the individual, and for the uniting of the many into one agency for the furtherance of righteousness and the repression and overthrow of iniquity, it has been concluded that that one organization is the church, and that all others, no matter how much the grace of God may abound in them or how manifest the fruits of the Spirit may be among their members, have no claim to the name of the church. This is the precise parallel of the fallacy in political philosophy which we have been considering. The ideal church, like the ideal government, does not exist. Only particular churches exist; and no one of these is the church more than any other. They are all the church of Christ in so far, and only in so far, as they have his spirit and do his work; and they derive all their value and authority from their demonstrated efficiency in building up and maintaining the spiritual life of men.

The kingdom is one; church organizations are many, and their value lies in their furtherance of the kingdom. A body of believers suddenly transplanted to some uninhabited land, without priest or bishop, could found as true a church as ever existed, if the spirit of God were among them.

We distinguish then the ideal church, or the kingdom, from any and all ecclesiastical organizations. We recognize no divinely instituted ecclesiastical body, no divinely dictated and fixed polity, but solely the one bond of union with Christ and of loyalty to him. Wherever this is present in any religious body we have the church; and wherever it is absent we have no church of Christ. Thus unity of the Spirit is the great and essential thing. The ecclesiastical forms it shall take on are matters to be decided by circumstances viewed in the light of experience.

The true church even on earth does not consist of the various ecclesiastical bodies, but of the spiritual disciples of our Lord, whether in these bodies or outside of them. Neverthe-

less, the question of church organization, while subordinate, is by no means unimportant. Organization may help, and it may hinder. There is need of wisdom here also. It is beyond all question that if existing ecclesiastical bodies were removed and living disciples were left free to reorganize the churches, there would be a very great change in present conditions. Comparatively few existing bodies could possibly begin again in the present condition of Christian thought. The petty sects, founded on petty quibbles and living in petty rivalry, have become an offense to the Christian heart and conscience, and will slowly disappear. But on the other hand, due regard being had to human nature as revealed in history, few thoughtful persons would look without foreboding on any plan, if it were possible, to unite all Christendom under one ecclesiastical dominion. Fortunately such a trust is impossible. The one thing needful is the unity of the Spirit, and this is by no means always secured by a common outward organization. The one thing desirable in the case of these

larger bodies is that they should recognize one another's Christian aim and effort, and refrain from mutually damaging rivalries in every field. But let them rival one another in love and zeal for the kingdom, stirring one another up to good works and rejoicing that Christ is preached, no matter by whom, and that the kingdom of God is growing among men.

And now in closing let us raise our thought to the church invisible, the kingdom in its glorious majesty, including not only the faithful living but also the faithful dead, the general assembly and church of the first-born, and the spirits of the just made perfect, freed from all earthly limitations and weakness, and set forever in the midst of the unwearying activities, the glorious living, the glorious loving, and all the ineffable and divine revealings of the life immortal.

VI

PRAYER

VI

PRAYER

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. — *Luke* 11 : 5–10.

The nature and function of prayer are so complex that we must view the subject from many sides if we would form any adequate conception. From some points of view it seems as if prayer were an impertinence. Our Saviour tells us that our Heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him; and he uses this consideration as an argument for prayers simple, short, and few.

God needeth not that we tell him anything, for he knoweth us altogether. Again, prayer may seem to be a reflection upon the divine goodness. The God who knoweth our needs without our telling may be presumed to be willing to grant what we need without our importunity. Indeed, our Saviour tells us that God is more willing to bless us than parents are to give good things unto their children. So far, then, from thinking that the divine love can be moved by importunity to grant what would otherwise be withheld, we must rather insist that it will withhold nothing that it could in wisdom grant. Thus prayer seems to imply a grudging Deity, and a grudging Deity is none.

Again, our Saviour's own utterances on this subject seem to be conflicting. On the one hand we are not to pray like the heathen, who think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Vain repetitions are forbidden. Our prayers are to be simple, and we are to have faith in God our Father, who knoweth us altogether. But, on the other hand, there is the

parable of the unjust judge, where God is represented as long deaf to the cries of his own elect, and only noticing them when, by their continual coming, they have wearied him. In the passage before us God is represented as wrapped in a midnight slumber from which he can be aroused only by our most determined effort and persistent knocking. Instead of being forward to answer us, he is backward; instead of being tremulously sensitive to our faintest cry, he seems almost insensible to our loudest call. The kingdom of heaven does not stand wide open to every one who chooses to straggle in; it is a walled city, to be carried by storm. It suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Now what is the meaning of all this?

If we should sit in the closet and speculate, we should probably never find our way through this maze. The doctrine of prayer must be interpreted psychologically, vitally, practically, and with reference to God's fundamental purpose in our life. From any other point of view it is easily made to seem absurd or contradic-

tory; as is the case with all practical doctrines when they are discussed apart from their practical relations.

Let our first inquiry then be, What is prayer?

The lowest and crudest notion concerning prayer is that it consists in asking God for things; and its value consists in getting the things for which we ask. This is the notion with which childhood always begins, and the only one which childhood can entertain. This notion is also prominent in popular religious thought, and underlies much of what is said concerning answers to prayer. This view is very superficial, and is the parent of much skepticism respecting prayer. It is no uncommon thing to find young persons skeptical with respect to prayer, because they have failed to get the things for which they have prayed; and often the faith of older persons breaks down from the same cause. In the stress of some trial they have faithfully prayed, and no answer has come. Friends or relatives have died, or their own health has

failed, or their way has been hedged up; and all the while Heaven has seemed as deaf to their cries and entreaties as the ear of the dead; and they have been left to sorrow and uncertainty and bereavement and manifold distress. Such cases abound; and if we would escape the painful doubts thence arising, we must revise and deepen our conception of prayer and its relation to the religious life. Plainly, the view of prayer as a talisman or a means of getting things is inadequate to experience.

As we have before said, prayer cannot be understood or discussed by itself, but only in connection with God's general purpose for men. Our Christian faith is that God's deepest purpose in the creation of men is that he may have spiritual children made in his image and likeness, who shall know him and love him, and to whom he may communicate himself in blessing for ever and ever. And our earthly life is arranged by divine wisdom for our discipline and development as the children of God. We must be practiced in indus-

try, in self-control, in integrity and faithfulness, in helpfulness and mutual trust, in the love and practice of righteousness, and in faith in God. In such a life we need preëminently to recognize our dependence on God, to relate our life to his will, to seek to enter into fellowship with him. This religious desire and effort of the soul to relate itself and all its interests to God and his will is prayer in the deepest sense. This is essential prayer. Uttered or unexpressed, it is equally prayer. It is the soul's desire after God going forth in manifestation. It may find expression in petition, or in worship, or in obedience, or in multitudinous forms of activity; but the thing itself is always the same — the soul's striving after God. This is the prayer which may exist without ceasing, consisting, as it does, not in doing or saying this or that, but in the temper or attitude of the spirit.

Prayer in this sense is the very essence of religion. Where there is such prayer, there is religion; and where there is any spiritual religion, there is such prayer. Both alike are

essentially the attempt to find God, to have communion with him, to relate our life with all its contents to the divine plan, and to subordinate our life to the divine will. To ask what use there is in prayer in this sense is the same as to ask what use there is in religion; and to the spiritually-minded the question could only indicate that the questioner has neither part nor lot in the matter.

But what of the prayer of petition?

The answer to this question must be as complex as the question itself. We begin by pointing out the psychological necessity of prayer in this form. The circumstances of human life are such that we are perpetually reminded of our needs and dependence at every turn. Goods are lacking; dangers threaten; perplexities surround us. The future is hidden, and omens of ill are rarely absent. This is true for the purely earthly life, and truer still for the hidden life of the spirit. Hence, wherever there is an active belief in God at all, there will always be petition. It is the great form in which the sense of de-

pendence finds expression in both private and public devotion. We recall our needs or they force themselves upon us, and we ask God for help and guidance and deliverance. Some religious thinkers of a quietistic type have condemned specific petition altogether, beyond the prayer that the will of God may be done; but this has been ecclesiastically condemned as an unreal exaltation, and is psychologically fictitious and practically impossible in most lives.

We may, however, allow that the prayer of petition will exist among men as long as there is prayer at all, and still we may question whether it has any value or effect beyond its reflex influence upon ourselves. Other things being equal, would not everything go on just the same without prayer as with it?

The affirmative here is often maintained in the name of the laws of nature. These laws, it is said, go on of themselves and make answers to prayer impossible, or at least incredible. This is a contention of a superficial mechanical philosophy. It commonly supposes

that nature runs of itself and does a great many things which were neither foreseen nor intended. They are simply outcomes of the mechanical necessity which rules throughout the entire system. Or it is supposed that the laws of nature, being uniform, forbid any interference and necessitate all consequents as resultants of their antecedents. The progress of philosophical criticism has vacated these notions. That self-running, self-executing nature is seen to be a fiction of unclear and superficial thinking. Nature, if anything more than a system of phenomena, is in any case dependent on a power beyond itself, and perpetually does only that which it has been determined to do. Hence, so far as the conception of nature goes, there is nothing to forbid the thought that it has been determined with reference to human needs in any minuteness of detail. If there be a God at all, man and nature must be comprised in one plan, and each must be considered with reference to the other.

Again, the uniformity of natural laws for-

bids no answers to prayer. Human purpose and volition are perpetually playing into the system of law, thereby realizing a multitude of effects which the system, left to itself, would never produce, yet in such a way that no law is broken. Natural law of itself would never do any of the things which men are doing by means of it. The work of the world is done by natural forces under human guidance. It is the outcome at once of law and purpose. But, if this is possible with man, it must be possible with God. Hence the laws themselves might well be commissioned by God to move parallel with our need and supply our want in such a way as to illustrate the uniformity of law and realize God's will concerning us at the same time.

The harmlessness of the notion of law becomes all the more manifest when we reflect upon the divine immanence in nature, a doctrine which is fast becoming universal in the world of thought. Popular religious thought is almost exclusively based on the deistic conception of an absentee God and a self-running

nature. God has at present no administrative function as far as nature is concerned, and all events result by mechanical necessity from their antecedents. God is responsible only for the starting of things in general, and this occurred so very long ago that we may well suppose that if he ever thought of the details of the cosmic on-going, they long since faded out of his interest and even out of his thought altogether. But this is an illusion which profounder thinking has long since dispelled. All finite things continuously have their existence in God; and all things come to pass, or stand, or go, because of the divine purpose of which they are an expression, and because of the divine will on which they depend and from which they proceed. Thus all things and events, even to the minutest details, are comprehended in the divine thought and purpose, and in their causality rest immediately on the divine will. If there is purpose in anything, there is purpose in everything. There is and can be no division of labor between God and nature, but all things are in his hand, and in

all things he is present to will and to do of his good pleasure.

The difficulty with the prayer of petition does not lie in the field of science and speculative philosophy, but rather in the field of experience and religious thought itself. Science does not indeed show that prayer cannot be answered; but of what value is this result if experience shows that it is not answered? And what comfort do we get from the volumes on "Remarkable Answers to Prayer" so long as these answers are lacking in our own experience? There is certainly little help in reading of some doubtful answer to prayer in some distant place and time, while we have to worry along as best we can on our own resources. Again, what can there be in mere petition to change the mind of God, so that he would do something because of it which he would not do without it? The bare thought seems to border on irreverence.

These questions represent real difficulties in the minds of a great many concerning the prayer of petition. We come upon them not

only among the irreligious, but also among thoughtful Christians themselves. We detect their influence at times even in the prayers from the pulpit, in the subjects of petition and sometimes in a tendency to avoid petition altogether except of the most general sort. The subject needs more careful analysis.

In further discussion of the subject we point out once more that our thought of prayer must be conditioned by our thought of God and his purpose concerning us. Prayer is not something standing alone and admitting of being discussed by itself; it must rather be considered in connection with the system of religious thought of which it forms a part. Not everybody can pray, not every petition is prayer, and not everything is the subject of prayer. Prayer in the Christian sense has limitations imposed by good sense in general and also by Christian thought and doctrine. These we now consider.

And first it is clear that the great outlines of life and the essential laws of the world and society do not lie within the range of petition.

Prayers for the maintenance of the uniformity of nature or for the reversal of chemical law or the law of gravitation would impress every one as absurd. These things are founded in the divine wisdom, and with them prayer has naught to do.

It is equally plain that petition is not needed to give information as to our wants. God knoweth us altogether. Nor is it needed to change God's disposition toward us, as if mere importunity could be efficient. Neither our much speaking nor our long speaking can be supposed to add efficiency to prayer.

Again, positively, our prayers must always be conditional, being offered in submission to the divine will and goodness. We may not prescribe to God, but must leave to him to do what is best. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," is the language of all true prayer.

Further, it is clear that we may not ask to be freed from the labor, the sorrow, and various vicissitudes of the human lot; for that would be to take ourselves out of the training and discipline which God has provided for us.

The general form and circumstances of life are a part of the ordinance of God, and are intended for discipline and development in the spiritual life. No prayer can change them. In this realm the answer to prayer commonly takes the form of increased strength or patience for the bearing of the burden, or some deeper sense of the divine presence and purpose; as when Paul prayed for the removal of his thorn in the flesh and received the answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Another specification of the same thought is that prayer cannot be used to ward off the consequences of our own ignorance or carelessness or neglect. No day of fasting and prayer would avail against the neglect of sanitary laws. No prayer can dissolve the connection of cause and effect and reap wheat from weeds. In all such cases obedience is the only effective prayer.

Again, God has ordained that men shall rely upon themselves in a great many things. No prayer can remove this fact; it would be

calamitous if it did. And no prayer is admissible which asks God to do for us what we ought to do for ourselves. This is the prayer of ignorance and laziness, and ought not to prevail. Of the same sort is the prayer which thinks to get the gifts of heaven without fulfilling the conditions; as when a student prays for knowledge and shirks the labor of study, or one prays for the gifts and graces of the spirit without girding himself for strenuous and holy living. Prayer conceived as a means of escaping work is an irreverence as well as a failure.

All true prayer must observe these conditions, and reflection upon them reveals that there is a great deal of praying which is not true prayer at all, but only an idle or irreverent or presuming utterance of words. But as we reflect further upon them the question also recurs, "What is the value of prayer conceived as petition?" We answer, it is practically and psychologically necessary for developing and expressing our sense of dependence on God, and this is one of the essential factors of reli-

gion. As the religious life grows, we may change the nature of our petitions. We may pass from particular requests to more inclusive spiritual prayers; but, in general, petition will always remain an element of our human prayers.

Further, such prayer, while a condescension on the part of God to human weakness, will long remain a necessary part of our religious life. As life wears on, brings out its trials and reveals its uncertainties, the religious soul is more and more thrown back on God as the only one who knows us, who fully sympathizes with us, and who can really help us. Thus the soul comes to carry everything to God in the assurance that he hears us, sympathizes with us, and will help us as his love may prompt and his wisdom may direct. It would be an unreal and unwholesome refinement which would seek to displace this childlike openness and confidence by some colorless and general expression of trust. To pray about everything in submission to God's will would be both more human and more Christian than a scrupulous limita-

tion of our prayers to what we might think permissible subjects of petition. God, without whom no sparrow falls and who numbers the hairs on our head, is not indifferent to anything which concerns his children, and they may talk with him about everything with all the freedom of children in their Father's house.

But still the old doubt pursues us. We see an important function of prayer and even its necessity from the human side, but does it effect anything on the divine side? It is, indeed, a necessary form of religious manifestation, but, other things being equal, would prayer alter anything, or would the result be the same with prayer or without it?

To resolve this doubt we must recur to what we have said about essential prayer. This, we said, is the desire and effort of the soul to relate itself and all its interests to God and his will. It may find expression in petition, or in worship, or in obedience, or in work of various kinds. Now, from the divine side, this attitude of the soul is the only thing

considered. This is the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man which availeth much. To it verbal petition adds no effectiveness, and the lack of such petition is no loss. In public prayer verbal petition is necessary to guide the thought of the people and to express their desires and sense of dependence. In private prayer it may often be necessary to fix and intensify the desire. But, in both cases, the essential thing is the attitude and desire of the spirit. The real prayer, the effective prayer, lies in the latter solely and alone. In other words, if we conceive two persons equally desirous of knowing and doing the will of God, and equally loyal in the spirit, we cannot believe that God, who looketh at the heart, would deal with them differently according to the amount of verbal petition; so that one who might have prayed in the morning to be delivered from accident and sudden death would be more safe than one who simply trusted in the divine care without specification. Nor can we believe that two communities, equally religious in spirit, would be dif-

ferently treated in the matter of rain because one included in its liturgy a prayer for the early and the latter rain while the other omitted it. Nor can we believe that two such communities, equally regardful of sanitary laws, would be differently treated in the matter of health because one offered and the other omitted public prayers for the public health and the warding off of pestilence. To suppose the opposite would be to turn prayer into magic and incantation. Let us say, then, that prayer as petition has no effect or significance on the divine side, except as it expresses that spiritual attitude of soul which it has pleased God to make a condition of the bestowment of his blessing. When God answers prayer he does not answer the verbal petition, but the desire of the soul going forth in work and the use of all the means for the attainment of the thing needed. From the human side we need prayer as petition for its place in social religion, for its value in religious pedagogics, and for its psychological necessity in the religious life of the individual; but, from the divine side, we

do not need prayer as petition, but only the prayerful attitude of the spirit; that is, the desire of the soul to relate itself and all its interests to God and his will. From the divine side the sufficient and all-inclusive prayer is "Thy will be done."

Here several scruples will arise in both religious and irreligious minds which have not thought this matter through. First of all, it will occur to some that this view keeps us far removed from God, that God leaves our prayers unanswered, and that we are left to the blind mechanism of law and nature with no Friend or Father near. This objection rests on that deistic conception of nature to which we have already referred. The answer must be that this mechanism is a sheer fiction. Nature is God's continuous deed; and natural laws are only his uniform ways of working. They are no barrier thrusting themselves between God and us. We live and move and have our being in him, and he is never far from any one of us. If, then, things go on in the familiar routine, it is not because God is

far-off, or that he has intrusted the supply of our wants to some lifeless machine, but because that routine is the best thing for us. Or, if our prayers are not answered as we desire, it is not because God does not hear us and sympathize with us, but because he has something better for us. The far-off, absentee God is a product of unclear thought. The true God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, whose ear is ever open unto our cry, but who answers only as divine love and wisdom dictate.

To the objection that our prayers are not answered on this view we can only reply by asking what we really desire in the matter. Do we mean to offer our prayer as an ultimatum? Do we wish to have our way without any reference to what God sees to be wisest and best? Are we so sure of our own judgment that we insist on it without submission to God? Is God there simply to receive and execute our dictates, and not as our Father who hears our prayer and decides for us according to his divine love and wisdom? Such

petition is not prayer; it is blasphemous raving. It is the supreme triumph of that selfishness in us which is the root of all evil and irreligion. No one can pray who does not make the will of God his supreme object, and no one has prayed who has not through his prayer come more into harmony with that will. Real prayer will always justify itself in the life of one who prays, but saying prayers with the aim of subordinating God to our selfish or shortsighted purposes must always be failure.

Thus we have considered some of the difficulties in popular thought concerning prayer, and have sought to find a point of view from which these difficulties, so far as they are real, might disappear. We pass now to some misconceptions which should be eliminated.

Prayer is often conceived as a talisman for getting something without work. Experience soon cures us of this notion in the physical realm, but in the social and spiritual world it lasts indefinitely. No one would think of raising a crop of wheat by prayer alone; but when we come to mental improvement, to

spiritual growth, to social reform and progress, there is a fancy that prayer alone is the great instrument of success. This overlooks the true nature of prayer, and also the conditional form of human progress. In all matters which God has made to depend on human action, that is not prayer, but irreverent impertinence, which pours itself out in verbal petition while neglecting to use the means which lie in our power. To appoint a day of fasting and prayer to ward off the cholera, while allowing the streets and houses and water-supply to reek with filth and all manner of insanitary abomination, would be more like blasphemy than prayer. A farmer, lying on his back in the shade, while his fields remain unplowed and unsown, cannot truly pray for a harvest. In all cases where our activity is demanded work is a necessary part of prayer; or rather it is the form which true prayer necessarily takes on.

And here we come upon the essential meaning of our text. Heaven's ear is deaf to easy verbal petitions. It is not until the whole soul

is engaged that we can be said to pray. Prayer in its purest essence is found in all action toward the desired object. It is the pouring out of the whole soul, not only in word, but in act as well, for the attainment of what we seek. Nor does God hasten to answer even then. He waits until the soul is all in earnest, until man has done all he can do, until the spirit of Jacob has come over the soul which will wrestle with the angel and never let go until it receives the blessing. Then God hears and answers. This is the meaning of this rather strange parable about the sleeping and churlish householder who at last yields to importunity.

And this is the law of God's dealing with men in general. Everywhere God makes our blessings largely dependent on our own efforts. Only thus could men be drilled and developed. He gives nothing until we want it and work for it. We must work out our own salvation. We ought not, then, to be surprised at finding the same law to hold in the spiritual realm. We cannot reap a spiritual harvest without

sowing the seed and doing the work. The man who would win the gifts of the Spirit, if he contents himself with simple asking, will not be heard. He who seeks anything of God in an easy and careless way never obtains. Not that God must be pleaded with to make him willing to give, but that we must acquire a certain fitness before we can receive. But when the soul is in full earnest, when with each new rebuff or disheartening silence its resolution takes deeper root and its effort grows more intense, then the answer comes: O Soul, great is thy faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

And if the answer should not come in the form in which we have sought it, it would in some better one. God often answers our prayers while we are still knocking, and in a better way than we asked for. We pray for physical good, and God answers with spiritual life. We pray to be freed from the burden, and God answers with patience and strength to endure. We pray to be spared the conflict, and God gives us courage to fight the good fight of

faith. The great end of religious effort is a developed soul, a soul with a deep sense of God, a soul in which faith, courage, and resolution are at their highest. That these things be attained is the greatest of blessings; they are God's best gift to us. The soul that prays for patience, and has patience enough to continue praying when Heaven seems deaf or dead, has been answered, though it knows it not. The soul that prays for energy and resolution, and finds its resolve to get the blessing growing stronger with each new rebuff, has already been answered. While we deem ourselves forsaken and unheard, the answer is going on. Faith has grown stronger, resolve has taken deeper root, the hunger and thirst after righteousness has increased, manhood has been nourished, and if, at last, the direct and visible answer to our prayer should come, the direct blessing would not compare with the benedictions which have come from its delay.

From all this I gather several lessons.

First, we should beware of offering prayers

which we ought to answer ourselves, or at least we should beware of thinking that they will have any influence in heaven. Such prayers, at best, can accomplish anything only with men. Here belong all the prayers of the spiritually idle and of all who are failing to use the means of influence in their power. Prayers for the reform of society, the conversion of the world, etc., belong here. In all these matters God has done his part already; and the only thing needed is that men should do theirs. One can hardly imagine anything more utterly inverted and out of place than a prayer for God to have mercy on the poor or on the heathen. The great need is that we ourselves should have mercy upon them. We may be perfectly sure that God will do his part without our prayer.

Secondly, we may pray about everything. This is the privilege of God's children. We may talk with our Father of whatever lies on our heart, and we need not trouble ourselves to get permission from science or philosophy. But these prayers must all be offered in de-

vout submission to the will and wisdom of our Father, and we must filially accept whatever he sends, whether it agrees with our wish or not. It is commonly of little importance and seldom of lasting significance whether we do, or do not, receive the thing on which for the time our heart may be set; but it is of great importance and of eternal significance that we come into harmony with the will of God, and that we see this will to be perfect in wisdom and love. With our native willfulness and earthliness, it is hard for us to realize this so as to say from the heart in the midst of our disappointments and distresses and losses, "God's will, not mine, be done." When we have really learned this, earth has little more to teach us. And whatever may come, let us remember that, in any case, we are not forsaken or alone, for the Father is always with us even though he seem to hide himself; and his loving will is being done though we cannot trace it.

Thirdly, we must not be disturbed over God's seeming delay. With the growth of

spiritual insight we make less and less of worldly goods, and see them in their fleeting and accidental character. Prayer, in this realm, can never be unconditional; and these things tend to cease to be objects of prayer at all, except as there may be manifest need. There is no ground for surprise in unanswered prayer in these matters. But God's delay in answering our prayers for spiritual blessings causes more surprise. We know it is God's will to give us these things, and we may pray without limitation. Why, then, the delay? The reason is found in what we have said. There is nothing magical in the spiritual life. Its foundations must be laid, not without our own effort, in the humble virtues of faithfulness, integrity, patience, persistence, industry; and until these are learned, the higher spiritual virtues, the deeper insight, the abiding peace, the unbroken communion, would be impossible and out of place. Without these foundations the higher gifts, if they were possible, would degenerate into spiritual pride and Pharisaism.

Fourthly, alleged answers to prayer should

be very carefully scrutinized before being allowed, and very carefully interpreted when allowed. There is considerable ignorance on this point in popular thought, which often leads to religious scandal. There is in religious experience so much of what from the popular standpoint must be viewed as unanswered prayer, and that on the part of the best and holiest, that we cannot be too careful in our interpretation. It is well known what crude and irreverent interpretations of God's providential government are often given by the ignorant and unspiritually-minded; and the same thing occurs in the matter of prayer. Some coincidence that fits into the person's desire is fastened upon as an answer to prayer, and not infrequently spiritual pride and Pharisaism result. But we must remember that unanswered prayer, so far as it relates to anything but the spiritual life, has been the rule in the experience of the Saints. Even the Master's prayers and those of the Great Apostle were not answered. The cup did not pass without being drunk, and the thorn in the

flesh was not removed. We must then beware of thinking that unanswered prayer necessarily points to divine disfavor, or to unfaithfulness on the part of the suppliant. Never was the Divine Son more well-pleasing to the Father, and never was the Father more gracious to the Son, than when the prayer for the passing of the cup went unanswered. In the recent Boxer uprising some of the missionaries escaped; and their escape was spoken of as a signal case of answered prayer. But what of those who did not escape, and for whom equally fervent and believing prayer was offered? Such notions are based upon a very shallow conception of prayer and of Christian teaching in general, and do more harm than good when offered as aids to faith. The interpretation of prayer, as of providence, must be left to the future where we shall know as we are known. Meanwhile, as wise Christians, we must pray as if work were useless, and work as if prayer were useless, and in both cases leave the result with God.

Finally, the study of this subject must be

perfectly barren except from the Christian standpoint. The life of prayer is the only thing that gives prayer any meaning. If God be our Father and we are his children, prayer will always be self-evident in its fitness and necessity. But we must distinguish between the spirit of prayer and the saying of prayers. The latter may become mechanical, and may include a great deal of unwise and mistaken petition. But there is no question about the spirit of prayer. This is the very gist and essence of religion, and this is life's deepest spring. Let us, then, aim to live in the sense of our dependence on God and in the desire and purpose to relate ourselves and all our interests to his will, so that all we think or desire or do may begin, continue, and end in him.

VII

SALVATION AND BELIEF

VII

SALVATION AND BELIEF

My subject must be taken to mean the relation of the creed, or intellectual belief, to salvation. This relation, however, is mutual. The creed has significance for salvation; and salvation has significance for the creed. This double significance appears in the texts I have chosen.

I. "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing to God; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." — *Heb.* 11: 6.

II. "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned." — 1 *Cor.* 2: 14.

In the first text belief is seen to precede and condition salvation; but in the second text

salvation, that is, the renewed spiritual life, is made a condition of true belief. Both statements are true, and both have to be taken into account in the study of Salvation and Belief. Our subject, then, becomes double.

I. *The Relation of Belief to Salvation.*

II. *The Relation of Salvation to Belief.*

I

Concerning the relation of correct intellectual belief to salvation there have been two extremes of error. On the one hand, it has been made the supreme condition ; and on the other, it has been denied all significance. The Athanasian creed illustrates the first error. It begins by saying, " Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith ; which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." Then follows a variety of highly metaphysical and intricate, not to say obscure, propositions about the Trinity and the incarnation; and after them comes the clause " This is the catholic

faith; which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." Here correct intellectual belief, or technical orthodoxy, is made a necessary condition of salvation; and by implication a large part of the Christian world, to say nothing of the non-Christian world, is handed over to endless perdition. This is one extreme.

The other extreme consists in repudiating all belief as unnecessary to salvation. This extreme is a natural reaction against the previous one. Orthodoxy comes in for many a clever sarcasm; and to call a man orthodox is almost to reflect on his intelligence. Dogma is likewise a word of evil sound, and to speak of a man as dogmatic is to stamp him as strong in assertion, but weak or wanting in argument. Orthodoxy and dogma have kept such bad company in the past, consorting often with unreason, oppression, and violence, that it is quite the fashion to decry and deride them. But this also is an error.

In both of these cases there has been a tendency to view salvation somewhat mechanically, and as an isolated event which might take

place without much connection with the moral and spiritual life of the person. Salvation is a rescue from an impending external danger, a cancelling of a debt which might be paid by another, a satisfying of a judgment standing against us on the books of heaven, a removal of the saved person from a place of danger to a place of safety. In short, salvation consists in getting into heaven as an external place and keeping out of hell as another external place; and the person who gets into heaven is saved and the one who gets into hell is lost.

This is the conception of salvation which has been implicit and even explicit in most of the discussion of the relation of salvation to belief. With this mechanical conception it seemed possible to think of a mechanical salvation. Reason and conscience not having much to do with the case, it was quite in order to find the condition of salvation in the due performance of some religious rite, or assent to some intellectual creed. Moreover, criticism could always be warned off by the reflection that the clay must not complain of the potter,

and that with God all things are possible. The same notion that getting into heaven as a place is the sum of salvation equally underlies most of the anti-dogmatic polemics. It is made a question of the salvation or damnation of the heathen, and various other unfortunates. And the aim is less to secure spiritual life than to keep any one from being hurt; for this nothing seems needed but universal and abounding good nature on the part of God.

Now out of such confusion as this there seems to be no escape but by more carefully analyzing our problem. Let us say, then, first, with all conviction, that simple intellectual assent to a dogma can never be a ground for acceptance with God, and that simple rejection of a dogma can never be a ground for rejection by God. The guilt or innocence of a soul can never be a matter of heterodoxy or orthodoxy, but only of the person's attitude toward his ideals of righteousness. God's judgment of the heathen also is not our affair; but we may be perfectly sure that the heathen will be judged by the light they have, and not by

the light they have not; and above all we may be sure that the God and Father whom the Lord Jesus revealed can be trusted to deal in love and mercy with all the souls that he has made.

But the progress of religious thought is gradually changing the whole problem. Salvation is no longer a forensic problem of artificial justice and criminal law, but a problem of moral and spiritual dynamics. The conception has been moralized and spiritualized. Salvation does not consist in reasoning men from external danger and putting them into a place of external safety, but rather in producing and maintaining the filial spirit toward God which shall issue in a life of obedience to his commandments, and in working together with God to bring in and establish his kingdom in the hearts and lives of men. Whatever mysterious conditions of our salvation there may be in the divine nature or in the exigencies of the divine government, they are not our affair, and will doubtless be provided for without our aid. All such conditions are suffi-

ciently covered for religious purposes by the one article, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." For us the supreme thing is salvation in the ethical and spiritual sense. This is all we have practically to deal with, and the one thing at which we should aim. Now what is the relation of belief to salvation in this spiritual sense? Or what is the relation of belief to the spiritual restoration, or unfolding and upbuilding of men in spiritual life?

Put in this way we no longer have a problem of artificial doctrine, but one of living moral and spiritual psychology. Of course belief here means not the act of believing, but the thing believed. It is the intellectual contents of our religion. It is in this sense that St. Jude uses it when he says, "But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God." Here the faith is the things believed, and they are presented as the foundation on which we are to build ourselves up in spiritual life. At once the necessity of some belief as creed or dogma appears; for a religion without a creed in this

sense is a religion without anything for intelligence, a religion, therefore, which can never command the assent or reverence of intelligence. In strictness, such a religion must be speechless. It could not get beyond interjections and inarticulate outcries. Religion could not exist even as a superstition without some intellectual contents; and religion can guard itself against superstition and aberration only as it has rational contents and assumes a rational form. When, then, we hear religion without dogma recommended, we must conclude that the objection is not to dogma in general, but to some specific dogma, or else that we are listening to random and ignorant talk. Belief in the sense of definite doctrine is absolutely necessary if religion is to have anything for intelligence.

The supreme practical importance of what men believe appears when we look at the non-Christian peoples. Their religious misbeliefs are one great source of their woes; and in these misbeliefs the thwarting, paralyzing, and defiling influences of their life have concen-

trated and incarnated themselves. They have misbeliefs about God and man, and the meaning and outcome of life. Out of these misbeliefs grow countless evils; and the people sit in darkness and the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron. There is no hope for them until these blinding and withering and destructive superstitions are replaced by the good views of God, by those conceptions of God and his purposes concerning us, and by those thoughts of our life, its meaning and outcome, which we have learned from the Christian revelation. And the power and work of Christianity depend essentially on the conception of God which it has brought to us and made familiar. This is the most holy faith, in the inspiration of which it has made history and remade men.

It is, then, an error verging on the extreme of thoughtlessness and even of illiteracy, to hold that it is of no importance what a man or a community believes. Indian pantheism will inevitably make India. Christian theism really held must work out into Christian civilization.

This notion of the practical unimportance of belief would never have been held but for an abstract and non-ethical conception of salvation, and the further fancy that the salvation of the heathen is somehow bound up with this view.

But because some doctrine is necessary if religion is to have anything for intelligence, it does not follow that all dogmas are necessary or important. The dogmatic activity of theologians has often produced dogmas of no practical value; and affirmation has been pushed beyond any possible knowledge. This is one fact which has brought the words dogma and doctrine into ill-repute. Again, religion on the creedal side was largely made a matter of correct belief, rather than of life. Thus arose what might be called the heresy of orthodoxy; which St. James rather sharply set aside by saying, "The devils also believe and tremble." Thus orthodoxy became a barren rationalism. Moreover, the lack of a critical philosophy and of insight into the nature of language and of salvation led to a confident exegesis

and to dogmatic constructions which are no longer possible. We read the works of this sort with which theological libraries abound, and we readily understand the hostility to dogma which is so marked in our time. We have outgrown a large part of the dogmas which have been historically held, because we have discerned in many cases their baselessness, and, in other cases, their abstract and unfruitful nature. Consider a work made up of matter like the following: "Theology teaches that there are in God one essence, two processions, three persons, four relations, five notions, and the circuminsession, which the Greeks call perichoresis." Consider also the plans of salvation which have figured so largely in theology, and the long debates concerning the order of salvation or the proper order of repentance, faith, regeneration, forgiveness, adoption, etc. Consider, too, the various kinds of faith which have to be distinguished in order to make the "plan" work. Within five years in a theological school of one of the minor denominations in the

middle west, a professor has been complained of for not putting the order just right. Fortunately, being of an accommodating disposition, he promised to adjust matters; and an imminent heresy trial was avoided. It is no wonder when doctrines have so largely been of this barren rationalizing type, that there should be a strong aversion to it. And men like Schleiermacher and Wesley and even Ritschl have done religion a great service by recalling it to life and experience, as its true foundation and justification.

We must not, however, let the aberrations and excesses of the dogmatists conceal from us the fact that the right apprehension and formulation of Christian truth is a matter of great practical importance for the spiritual life. As I have said before, a religion without doctrines is a religion with nothing for intelligence, and which therefore must be speechless. It must always be an important duty of the Christian church to maintain pure doctrine. It must beware of a deistic conception of transcendence which makes an impassable

gulf between God and man. It must equally beware of a pantheistic immanence which cancels all distinctions and lands us in the slough of the Indian religions. It must beware of a doctrine of the incarnation which makes it only a Docetic illusion, or a Socinian denial. It must beware of an abstract ethical conception of God which leaves no place for love; and it must equally beware of a universal good-naturedness which dissolves away all moral law. But in insisting on doctrine we must remember that there are doctrines and doctrines, and must confine ourselves to the fundamental Christian facts rather than to theological theories about the facts. Our creeds in the future will be very much shorter than they have been in the past. We shall reduce them to the fundamental working doctrines, something after the fashion of the Apostles' Creed; and we shall do this from two convictions. First, the power and life of Christianity lie altogether in those parts of the creed which express the great Christian facts, and not in those parts which only ex-

press our theories about the facts. Secondly, these theories, supposing them established, are practically barren and unfruitful.

So much for the relation of belief to salvation. Let us next consider the relation of salvation to belief.

II

Our great fundamental human beliefs in every field are essentially outgrowths and formulations of life, rather than conclusions of a syllogism. They find their original source and their continued support in living, rather than in academic thinking. This insight into the practical and vital nature of belief is one of the great achievements of later philosophic thought. The leading error of the dogmatist in this matter has been to lay chief emphasis on intellectual instruction and ratiocinative processes as sources of belief; as if by a series of well-chosen syllogisms we could put to flight all doubters and shut man up to faith. The implication was that matter which could not be thus formally treated and argued out is unworthy of belief. This is the fancy which

underlies all rationalistic schemes, religious and irreligious alike.

But a better doctrine of belief has made such schemes obsolete. We have come to see that belief roots in life rather than in logic. What a man believes will depend less upon the acuteness of his intellect than upon the manner of man he is, the fundamental interests and tendencies of his nature. In the ethical, social, political, scientific fields, as well as in religion, life is first and fundamental. As this life unfolds, the understanding seeks to formulate and express it; but the work of the understanding is merely regulative. It gives form to a content which it cannot produce; and faith itself rests at last not on a logical cogency of argumentation, but on the energy of the life in which it roots. Our fundamental needs and interests are the driving and directive force of life, and if these were lacking mere reasoning could do nothing. It would float in a vacuum. Without cognitive interests, there would be no science or philosophy; without moral interests, there would be no

ethics; without religious interests, there would be no religion. It is the pure in heart who see God. The meek are guided in judgment. Those who do his will know of the doctrine. On the other hand, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. In short, all truth that takes hold on life is empty or non-existent apart from the life in which it roots. Thus life becomes in a very important sense at once the source and test of doctrine, religious and all other alike.

This, however, does not mean that we can simply read off from the life of the Christian community the sufficient formulas of faith. The matter is more complex than this. We should rather say that life and doctrine develop together. As there can be no effective doctrine without life, so conversely life will not get far without doctrine. Apart from doctrine life has no clear consciousness of its own needs and tendencies, and often misses the way from lack of self-understanding. It comes

out into clear self-consciousness only as its contents and implications are formulated and expressed. From this point of view it is a great step forward when an instinctive practical assumption is expressed in a clear doctrinal statement. Then first faith begins to understand itself and secures a content for the intellect and a formula for practice. Some of the early creeds were great gains to Christianity in this way, as they first made clear to the Church its intellectual foundation. It is, then, a mistake to divorce the practical life from the intellectual, or to divorce belief from conduct. They are really only the opposite poles or aspects of the one indivisible religious life; and to ignore or depreciate either is to injure both. Where there is no religious life, doctrine will become a withered formula; and where there is no rational formulation of doctrine, the religious life will fail of its true development and will be in serious danger of losing itself in crippling and debasing superstition. Religion in the dark of ignorance and without the light of intelligence can never be a whole-

some growth. There will always be, then, a place and an important function for religious and theological thought. Form without life is husk and chaff, but life which does not embody itself in its appropriate form must perish. We shall not, indeed, go back to the Athanasian creed with its damnatory clauses. We shall not deny the Christian character of men whose conception of Christian truth seems to us imperfect, so long as they are working the works of righteousness. But none the less we shall also strive to maintain the purity of essential Christian teaching, because we know that sooner or later fundamental errors of belief must reproduce themselves in practice.

This practical nature of belief leads to several important inferences for the Christian teacher. A large part of belief has its origin in life. It follows that where the appropriate life is lacking, the belief will not spring up, or will die out. Science could not develop among savages, and if it were planted among them from without it would soon perish. The necessary cognitive life and interests would be

lacking. The same is true of Christian faith. The supreme condition of its effective spread is the Christian community in which Christian principles are in some measure realized. Argument counts for little in the world compared with personal influence, imitation, contagion. No high belief would be possible in a world of utterly mean and selfish men; and no low belief could long maintain itself in a world of practical saints. One great obstacle to the spread of Christianity is Christians; and the supreme condition of its spread is the development of a higher type of practical Christians. The deepest things cannot be argued out; they must be seen in life, and then they justify themselves. Christian climate, Christian atmosphere, Christian example are the things without which Christian teaching must always be ineffective and futile.

Again, life as a whole is so complex and many-sided that what we find in it must depend largely on ourselves and what we seek. We must never forget the scholastic maxim,

"Whatever is received, is received after the manner or nature of the recipient." In an important sense we find ourselves in life; that is, we interpret life in accordance with our own aims and interests. Our fundamental beliefs are never things which can be technically proved. They are of the nature of choices. They represent our assumptions, or postulates, or practical platform, or the things for which we stand. Or rather, they represent us. They reveal the tendencies of our nature, our affinities, the things we like or wish to be. Such beliefs can never be deduced or tested by syllogistic rules. The underlying fact is a vital process, rather than a logical one. At bottom we have competing tendencies in life or conflicting theories in life; and how we decide between them will depend mainly upon the moral personality. The beatitudes can never be proved by argument. They are forever false to the Gentiles, and forever true to the children of the kingdom.

Finally, we must note that a large part of belief becomes real only in life. It is a curious

fact that truths which bear on practice become vague and shadowy when abstracted from practice. They must be translated into conduct before they become real or acquire any power over us. From the form of human development the intellectual belief must begin with hearsay and verbal assent; and the problem for the individual is to transfer these assents to hearsays into living personal convictions. This can be done only as the beliefs are wrought into life, or as life is built around them. The living conviction is not a product of speculation; it has to be achieved or conquered in life itself. Even faith in God is largely an assent rather than a real conviction; as appears from the little practical hold it often has on men, whether as lawgiving or as a source of inspiration. We begin our religious life by saying, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." That is formal faith. When we work this confession into life, and believe when hope is deferred and the heart is sick, believe in the face of the hard and bitter things of life and the sinister and despair-

provoking aspects of history, and trust him though he slay us — that is real faith.

Thus we see that the relation of belief and life is no simple thing to be solved by any academic and rationalistic reflection; it is rather something which takes us into the depths of our life and being. Our real faith is not the formula we repeat, but the principles by which we live. We may be practical atheists while professing faith in God, and veritable heathen while claiming to be Christians. And when the theological formula is correct, we may miss the spiritual truths. In the deepest sense truth is revealed only when it is understood; and this is possible only to the prepared heart. The truth is hidden by blindness, or is warped into some image of our narrowness, until the inner illumination is reached. Then unsuspected meanings break forth out of the word, and all things are made new. But God respects our freedom in the mental world as well as elsewhere. He has made the world of life such that those who seek him with the whole heart find him, and also such that those who will

may go astray. The meek he guides in judgment, but with the froward he shows himself froward. The kingdom of truth is inaccessible to all prejudice, and levity, and indifference, whether in science or in religion.

Therefore, let us keep our hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life.

VIII

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE WORLD

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THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE WORLD

And be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. — *Romans* 12 : 2.

In the previous verse St. Paul has urged his readers to offer themselves in holy and living sacrifice to God as their rational and spiritual worship. And now he goes on to exhort them not to form or fashion themselves after the pattern of the world, but to transform themselves by an inward mental renewal, so that they should have experience of the will of God, as the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect. By this renewing of their minds they were to be transfigured or metamorphosed from within, as the new life built for itself an appropriate form and manifestation.

I make this text the basis for a consideration of the Christian doctrine of the world, a sub-

ject on which there is not a little confusion that is often misleading and sometimes harmful.

This term world has a great variety of meanings in its scriptural use. Sometimes it means simply the physical earth. "The world also is established that it cannot be moved." Sometimes it means the inhabitants of the earth. Sometimes it means the present order of human life and history, as in the antithesis of the world that now is to that which is to come. Very often it is spoken of as an evil power, or organization, opposed to God and hostile to spiritual life. Examples are, "The prince of the world"; "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you"; "The friendship of the world is enmity with God"; "I have overcome the world"; "Love not the world"; "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In these cases the world is variously conceived, but always as a hostile spiritual power or organization which is the enemy of God and good men; or at least as something which, if

not actively and positively opposed to spiritual living, is no friend to grace, and its influence all makes in the downward direction. The result of this varied usage of the term is a deal of confusion in popular thought, both religious and irreligious.

Enlightened religion denounces the world and worldliness, but not always with proper discrimination. And enlightened irreligion, seeing that innocent things are often unwisely condemned as worldly, concludes that this evil world of which we often hear in the churches is only a fiction of theology. Both parties are mistaken; and one of the needs of our time is to clear up our thought in this matter.

One of the most grievous and pernicious blunders in practical religion has been the adoption of the false antithesis between things secular and things religious. In this way the fancy was formed and became dominant that religion is an interest by itself, a kind of detached movement in a non-communicating apartment of the mind, and that religious

work consists of the formal exercises of piety, such as prayer, Bible-reading, church attendance, public and private worship, the administration of church matters, etc. This notion to a large extent still rules the popular thought even of the Protestant churches. Of religion as a principle which should rule all living and make all life religious, there has been, taking the church as a whole, little apprehension and still less realization.

Thus the secular was set aside as non-religious; and the next step, which was really only a part of the same thing, was to view the secular as worldly, or to identify it with the world. Certainly secular activity is busied with worldly things, with trade and manufacture, and transportation, and science, and education, and all the enormously complex industry needed to keep the civilized world a-going and save it from falling back into barbarism. Of course then it is worldly, and as such must be unfriendly, if not hostile, to religion. It was this blunder partly which led to the great ascetic movements in the Asiatic

religions and in the early and medieval Christian church. It was this blunder which withdrew and withdraws multitudes of men and women from the wholesome and useful work of life to engage in the idle and barren works of a factitious religiosity. It is this blunder of which we even now often hear echoes in ignorant disparagement of wealth and learning and culture and refinement, in pharisaic judgment of men who are out in the open field of the world, doing the work that must be done if humanity is to be helped forward into better conditions.

By the secular here I mean that body of instincts and impulses and needs, and corresponding activities and agencies and products, which spring out of the human constitution and our relations to one another and to the physical world. The housing, feeding, and clothing of the race are a fundamental part of it. Provision for education, for the social structure, for political development is equally significant. The enormous routine work of every day whereby ever-recurring wants are

ceaselessly met, and human life made possible, is basal. Thus the secular realm is as complex as humanity, being but a reflex of human nature and human needs in the circumstances of our human life. And it represents God's will for humanity. No part of it can be left out of human life without calamity. If we leave out the elementary industries, the race perishes at once from hunger and cold. If we leave out the social and political organization, the race is confined to savage conditions. If we leave out transportation and commerce and the resulting exchange of ideas and products, only a wretched society would be possible. If we leave out education and science, the race remains in hopeless ignorance, unstirred by any inspiration or aspiration. If we leave out the ministries of art and beauty, the race could attain only to a dull, monotonous round of low utilities. We are then to see in the secular order the ordinance of God and his will concerning us. He gives it to us for our development into life, as the means by which we realize ourselves, and by

which the human order is made possible. And not without blasphemy can we view it as common or unclean, or turn from it as something essentially hostile to our spiritual life. Not apart from the secular life, but in that life, are we to work the will of God by making that will the inspiring principle and standard of all our work.

Setting aside then as false and blasphemous the notion that would identify the world of nature and the world of human life with the forbidden world of religious teaching, we next ask, What is the world to which we are not to conform ourselves? What is that world, conformity to which is incompatible with the true life of the spirit and love of the Father? Is it a fiction of theology, or is it a serious reality and a dangerous enemy of our souls?

In reply I point out that worldliness is a spirit, a way of looking at and valuing things, a direction of thought and desire and devotion. Our Lord said of the Gentiles that they were taken up with the questions, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And

wherewithal shall we be clothed?" They had little thought beyond these things. And the Saviour warned his disciples, not against eating and drinking, but against undue anxiety in connection therewith, against being so immersed therein as to find nothing else in life. On the contrary, they were to subordinate this outward life to the will of God by seeking first, or making fundamental, the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Now in this Gentile view we have the root of worldliness. It is primarily and essentially a devotion to the sensuous and outward life unbalanced by any higher spiritual insight or aspiration. In the divine plan this outward life has its place and function. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." But when the outward life is made supreme, then spiritual confusion and disaster soon result. The lower nature flowers out into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. And this view next pervades society, organizes itself, develops into social forms, evolves a practical philosophy of living,

and, unresisted, tends to become dominant and supreme. Nor does it end here, for this movement is downward. Beginning by being earthly and sensuous, it often goes on to become sensual; and in the development of its sensual and selfish maxims, it not infrequently ends by becoming devilish. Thus the kingdom of iniquity has its foundation in the worldly view; and the essence of this view is the blindness to spiritual values and the devotion to the external and transitory aspects and interests of life. The worldly are those who live in this spirit and are under the influence of this way of thinking. And the world in the religious sense may mean either this system of thought and life, or the body of persons who are possessed by this world spirit. Now it is clear that the world, as a spiritual enemy, is no fiction of the pulpit, but a very real fact and foe. The devotion to the transitory, the outward, the unreal and the fictitious, the blindness or indifference to life's true values thence resulting, and the system of maxims and judgments and ideals which spring up in

accordance therewith — these things beset us on every side. The masses of mankind, the Gentiles, dream of nothing else and desire nothing else. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned ; and they are of the earth, earthy. A glance into the daily press reveals at once the prevailing tastes and interests of the community. What a picture we get of the mentality and morality and spirituality of men as we wade through the mass of idle gossip, the details of crime, the exploitation of the animal side of our nature, the exhibitions of social vanity, the general turning away from what is wholesome and significant and uplifting in life to wallow in social garbage and idle vanities. We hear of simian banquets, and of functions where the expense of the caterer is carefully advertised and the costumes of the guests are elaborately described. We see wealth in utter brainlessness and bad taste disporting itself in hideous mental and moral squalor ; and we see poverty looking on in envious desire, as if there were nothing great beside. Thus the natural man unconsciously

reveals himself, and he who runs may read. What a series of beatitudes the natural man would write if he were left to himself! How they would differ from those pronounced by our Lord! To be meek and pure in heart, to see God and to hunger and thirst after righteousness, these things do not appeal to him. If any one would see how far the spirit of the world is from the spirit of Christ, let him compare a worldling's beatitudes with those of the Master. Let him reflect for a moment upon the things which men passionately desire and pursue, the things they crowd to see or eagerly read, the things of which they boast and on which they pride themselves. How grotesque it all seems to reason, how sad it seems to the enlightened conscience.

Nor do those who are seeking to live the life of the spirit find it by any means easy to escape or overcome the world. If we should reflect upon the movements of our hearts and the gravitation of our own desires, we should find that the world is very much with us. This devotion to the outward appearance, this

measuring things by unreal and unchristian standards, haunts us all and pursues us even into the sanctuary. How hard it is to throw off our bondage to the opinions of men and to view all things from the divine standpoint, to consider them in their reality and eternal significance, to use the world without abusing it or being enslaved by it. How hard to judge persons in their character, rather than in their circumstances. How hard even for the Christian pastor himself not to become a respecter of persons because of different externals. Reflection on these things will soon convince us that the world as our spiritual foe is no fiction, but a dread reality; that conformity to it is indeed enmity with God, that we must overcome it if we would enter into life, and that we can overcome it only as we are renewed in our minds, that is, as we get new ways of thinking and feeling about things, or as we come out from under the illusions and misplaced devotions of the worldly life into the spiritual vision and loyalty of disciples of Christ.

Worldliness, then, is a spirit, a temper, a mode of thought and feeling. It does not consist in eating and drinking, — we all must eat and drink, — but in finding the end and meaning of life in eating and drinking. It does not consist in being occupied with secular things, — we all must be largely thus occupied, — but in pursuing the occupation in a mean and sordid spirit. It does not consist in the pursuit of wealth, — such pursuit is often a Christian duty, — but in pursuing wealth as an end in itself, or for the pampering of the flesh or the gratification of vanity or low ambition. It does not consist in delight in culture, refinement, beautiful things, social pleasure, innocent amusement, — all these things are to be desired, and life would be barren and inhuman without them, — but in such submersion in these things that the supreme aim of life is ignored or lost sight of. The Son of man came eating and drinking, graciously sharing in the common lot and looking with kindly eye upon life's innocent joys, but he was not worldly on that account. In short,

worldliness as a spirit is entirely independent of conditions and circumstances. The very poor may be as worldly as the very rich; the very ignorant may be as worldly as the most learned. The crudest and most unrefined society may show as utter worldliness as the most cultured. The same devotion to the outward, the same fictitious standards of value, may be found in all classes, and commonly appear in their most revolting vulgarity where there is least external culture and refinement to gild them. The most inveterate class distinctions and vanities are often found among the abjectly poor and ignorant; and the great source of the envy of the poor against the rich is their own lack of self-respect; that is, their measurement of life by external or worldly standards. And many a damnation of worldliness is simply the envious utterance of poverty, or ignorance, or bad taste, seeking to disguise itself under the hypocritical assumption of superior spirituality. But we are not spiritual because we are poor, or worldly because we are rich. We are spiritual, if at all,

because we measure values by the Christian standard; and we are worldly, if at all, because we measure values by the worldly standard.

Let us not deceive ourselves, then. Worldliness is a spirit, and is equally compatible with all external conditions. It is quite as compatible with poverty as with riches, with ignorance as with learning, with bad taste as with refinement, with a church as with a business corporation, with religious exercises as with secular pursuits, with the minister's occupation as with any other. There is no place or occupation or condition in the human world into which worldliness may not enter. Some of the worldliest men I have ever known were ministers, and some of the most odious exhibitions of worldliness are to be found in the house of God. The minister who prays to be heard of men, whose interest in his work is for what he can make out of it, who subordinates everything to his own selfish advancement, is as worldly in spirit as any pothouse politician, and still more odious to God because of the

added sacrilege. The church, also, that is more concerned for style and social form and prestige, than for the kingdom of God, is an incarnation of worldliness and one of its most hideous manifestations. There is, then, nothing that may not be made worldly by the worldly spirit. And on the other hand, there is no place or occupation or condition in the human world, which is not immoral, that may not be fitted with the spiritual mind and so related to the divine will as to bless man and glorify God. For as worldliness may be found in all places and conditions, so spirituality may be found in the same. In both cases it is nothing external, but an inner attitude of the spirit.

And this leads to another reflection. Worldliness being a spirit, non-conformity thereto is not to be sought in, nor obtained by, odd and peculiar manners, strange modes of dress or habits of speech, and similar mechanical devices, but by renouncing the worldly spirit and by living in the Christian thought of life and its meaning and value. That is, we must replace the worldly devotion to the external and transi-

tory by the Christian devotion to the real and abiding and eternal. Here, too, great blunders have been made in religious history. Many have thought to express non-conformity to the world by withdrawing from secular pursuits, by artificial and affected speech, by ignoring the familiar conventions of social intercourse, and by strange forms of dress. Some of these things have been made special marks of differentiation from the world by various religious bodies, and have been pursued into minute detail by the more mechanically minded. All this shows a lamentable misunderstanding of the properly spiritual nature of both worldliness and Christianity.

Thus we have seen what the world is. It is not the secular life, as many have falsely imagined; nor is it a theological fiction, as others have supposed; but it is the incarnation of a spirit, and the organization of those who live in that spirit and by its aims and maxims and principles. And the danger of conformity to it becomes apparent. It is the assumption of forces and tendencies which

make for spiritual degradation and death. It is clear as the sun that the friendship of the world must be enmity with God, and that if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him.

So much for the negative side of the matter; now a word on the positive command. We are not to fashion ourselves on a worldly pattern, but we are to metamorphose ourselves (the Greek word here is the original of our word metamorphose) in the making new of our minds, so that we may prove by experiment, or practical test, the thing which is good, acceptable, and perfect, which is the will of God. In other words, we are to enter into the thought and spirit of Christ. We are to view life from his standpoint, to judge it by his standards, to live it in his spirit. Thus the mind is renewed or made new. Its contents are changed. Its affections are rightly directed. Its devotion is given to the right things. It is brought out from worldly bondage to things seen and temporal, and is fixed on things unseen and eternal. Thus it comes to know the truth, and the

truth makes it free — free from the opinions of men, free from worldly illusions, free from the clamor of passion and low ambition. It sees through and rises above all these things as it regards them from the standpoint of the eternal. And as it views all things under the form of the eternal, it becomes itself allied to the same. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Thus the mind is made new. Of course in this work we need the divine help, but the renewal of the mind consists in bringing about this condition of things. Equally of course the work is not completed at once; it is a process, as the Greek word shows. And this inward process, like a living and organic principle, is to metamorphose us, not by external and mechanical mending, but by a vital growth from within so that the renewed mind manifests itself in a transfigured life. Thus Christ himself is formed in us, the hope of glory.

Let us hear the solemn words of the apostle: "Love not the world, neither the things that

are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

IX

OBEDIENCE: THE TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP

IX

OBEDIENCE THE TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP

And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." — I *John* 2 : 3–4.

OBEDIENCE is the test of religion. This is what the Lord requires of us, and this is all the Lord requires of us, the filial spirit issuing in lives of obedience to his commandments.

Great care was shown by our Lord and his disciples to make this matter clear, so that no one should have any warrant for thinking that anything else whatever could take the place of obedience. Note the words of our Lord: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then

will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Thus obedience is made the test of love, of friendship, and of being in the kingdom. Likewise, the Apostle John is peculiarly strenuous in this matter in the letter from which our text is chosen. The text itself is a striking instance. Again, "My little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous; he that committeth sin is of the devil." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen." St. James also declares, "If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain."

Once more, then, Obedience is the test of religion. Let every one hear and mark this fact. There can be no true child of the kingdom, whether in the church or out of it, who is not a worker of righteousness. Conversely, all workers of iniquity, whether in the church or out of it, are children of the devil. Again, if we profess love or friendship for Christ, but keep not his commandments, our profession is vain and our true place is with the workers of unrighteousness. However great our eloquence, or mighty our works, or profuse our devotions, we belong in the outer darkness with the workers of iniquity, and sooner or later we shall go to our proper place.

Historically this has not always been understood. In the non-Christian systems there has been little connection between religion and righteousness, and often their divorce has been complete. For the most part the religion consists of a set of rites and practices, sometimes silly, sometimes wicked, and always artificial; and their due performance is religion. Water is poured on a stone, meal is cast into the fire,

an animal is slain, pain or loss of various kinds is undergone. But in all this there is commonly little or nothing that looks or tends to righteousness. Even in the Old Testament the moralization of religion was very slow and imperfect. Some of the prophets saw the truth, but the worshipers themselves largely lost themselves in ritual and mechanism, and made this the essence of religion. Legal and ritual righteousness, rather than personal and heart righteousness, was their aim.

The thorough moralizing of religion is first found in Christianity. Here everything in religion is made to depend on the heart. God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth, and only such worship is accepted. Acceptance with God is not a matter of temples and rites and forms, but of the love and loyalty of the heart. But the disciples do not always understand this. The world-old tendency to separate religion and righteousness and reduce religion to rites and forms, the old fancy that an evil life can be compounded for by ritual exercises, or mechanical devotion, or correct-

ness of belief, still manifest themselves. There are great religious bodies in which the ritual and sacerdotal and mechanical element is so prominent as to obscure the moral factor. The attention of the disciple is not directed to working the works of living righteousness, but to observing the mechanical routine the church has prescribed. And this is religion. And God, who looketh at the heart, and who will not hear us if we regard iniquity in our hearts, is thought to be well pleased.

The same divorce of piety and righteousness is often reached in other religious bodies by setting up some subjective test of religion, commonly an emotional test or experience of some sort — in any case something other than the supreme test of obedience. This sometimes goes so far as practically to displace our Lord himself as the object of faith and trust. Instead of fixing their attention on Christ and his grace and the Father whom he has revealed, men often fix their attention on their own inward states and judge themselves accordingly. Hence we often find inquirers so con-

fused that, instead of seeking to serve God and keep his commandments, they are seeking to have an experience; the mark of discipleship is not in obedience to the Master, but in various states of feeling which are supposed to be peculiarly religious. And they talk of these things in a strained and artificial way, the result being that the experience they talk about is not one they really have, but one they suppose they ought to have; and one respecting which they have an uncomfortable sense of unreality when they seriously think about it. A further result is that in all the churches it is no uncommon thing to find persons whose piety is no security for righteousness, and who seem to have little idea of any connection between the two. They may abound in religious sentiment and emotion, and be zealous in devotional exercises, but somehow or other all these things together fail to issue in any sturdiness and integrity of character, or in any active love and practice of righteousness. And much religious teaching tends in the same direction, from failure to fix attention

on obedience as the supreme and only decisive test of discipleship.

In our individualistic Protestant churches we are beyond the notion that religious mechanism or sacerdotal proxyism can recommend us to God; but we are not perfectly free from the tendency to find the test of religion in something other than obedience. I wish now to consider the aberrations thence resulting.

This tendency has a historical root. It sprang partly from a desire to make religion a personal matter in distinction from religion by proxy and attorney, as in sacerdotalism. It also sprang more particularly from a desire to deny all salvation by works, and to find marks of grace whereby the disciple should infallibly be marked off from all the counterfeits of "mere morality" and "natural goodness." But in the progress of psychology, ethics, and theology, we have reached a stage where the matter needs restatement from a modern point of view.

The centre of the religious life is the moral will. The thing which a man chooses and

aims at in conduct makes him. When we know the bent of will and choice we can infallibly locate the man in his moral relations. The distinguishing mark of the child of the Kingdom is that his will is set to do the will of God. The filial surrender to God to do his will is the central and supreme thing in true religion. This is the sum of God's demands upon us, and our all-inclusive duty. There is no substitute for it; nothing else can take its place. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, now and forevermore, in this world or in any other." This is the one and only sure mark of grace and discipleship. Having given himself to God to do his will, the disciple's immediate duty is to report for orders.

Now this direction of the will is preëminently revealed in conduct. Owing to the unity of our nature, the will seldom stands alone without emotional attendants; but these attendants are no infallible indications of the will's bent. Even in our earthly affections this is the case. Love itself does not reside essentially in ebullitions of the sensibility, but

in the fixed purpose to please and to serve. In the life of the family this is the only form in which it manifests itself most of the time; and when this purpose is not present, we have no proper love, but only passing fancy and attraction. Every person of any experience knows that nothing whatever is worthy the name of love which has not taken on the form of a fixed purpose to please and to serve. The same is true of our love of God. Its essential mark is the fixed purpose to please and to serve. Where this is given we have the essential thing. Where it is not given we have delusion or pretense. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love me, he will keep my word." Thus the Master himself makes obedience the one test of love.

We are coming to understand this matter better than formerly. Ethical analysis has revealed the moral will as the centre of charac-

ter, and physiological and psychological study has shown the uncertain character of emotion and feeling as spiritual tests. Untrained and unspiritual thought always tends to seek after a sign. In the outer world it has sought God in abnormal wonders, rather than in the steadfast ordinances of nature. In the inner world it has looked for God in lawless ebullitions and visions and various pathological phenomena, rather than in the orderly movement of rational thought, the deepening of moral insight, the quickening of the moral sensibilities, and the strengthening of the moral will. The former gratify the love of the marvelous and are supposed to be far superior to anything revealed in reason and conscience. But this, too, we are outgrowing. We are learning that God is as certainly present in the orderly and normal movements of reason and the moral nature as in the abnormal and extraordinary; and perhaps even more so. We have further discovered what a variable and complex thing the emotional life is. Even religious emotion is seen to be physically con-

ditioned and to strike its roots deep in our physical system. As to its form and manifestation, we have discovered that it is mainly an outcome of temperament rather than of character. Hence we no longer take it at its face value, but test it by the law of righteousness. We have got beyond the naïve notions of an earlier generation, according to which each fluctuation of feeling was interpreted as a mark of divine favor or disfavor, without any suspicion of the laws of emotional periodicity and of their physical and temperamental conditions.

Of course I would not be understood to deny that the religious life has its emotional attendants. But it is clear that these vary very greatly with different persons and that they are no test of discipleship. It is further clear that emotions are wholesome only when they spring from ideas. Religious emotion is rational only when it springs from the contemplation of religious truth, and from building ourselves up on our most holy faith of the Gospel. Whenever it is sought for itself

and by itself, it becomes neurological and pathological, as in the excesses of revival meetings among the more ignorant of the colored people in the South.

Neither would I be understood to deny that God may make gracious revelations of himself in the hidden depths of the spirit. He may cause strange peace and rest and joy to spring up within us. This is to be coveted, and, when given, thankfully received. But we must also remember that he has made a more sure revelation in the Scriptures and the moral nature; and any individual revelations which conflict therewith are to be decisively set aside. And we must further remember that persons unskilled in reflection and untrained in thought easily mistake their own notions for revelations from above. Every generation, almost every community, has seen shocking illustrations of the ease with which this is done. The noblest and the basest feelings lie strangely near each other in our complex nature, and the basest are easily mistaken for the noblest, unless we are careful to try them

by the rule of obedience. The result is that we must bring all revelations, manifestations, emotions, outpourings to the one sure test of righteousness. Whatsoever thing of this kind springs from the contemplation of Christian truth, and leads to greater faithfulness and devotion of righteous living, is of God. And nothing else is; but is a matter of nerves, or social contagion, or loosely knit intellect, or moral flabbiness, or all combined. By their fruits ye shall know them.

There is another set of religious feelings very different from those just mentioned, but which equally fail to attain to obedience as the central thing. These are the feelings which gather around the æsthetic and contemplative side of religion. For any fairly developed mind of normal character, religion must be a profoundly interesting subject of reflection. It takes hold on the unseen and the eternal. It holds a philosophy of existence, — the key to the puzzles of life, the solution of its problems, the harmony of its discords, the justification of all finite being. We are thrown back upon

it when we contemplate the tragedy of human life; art and poetry cry out for it; a sense of dependence and incompleteness forces us upon it. Nameless longings and voiceless aspirations find in religion their expression. Under these and similar influences the human mind has developed its great religious forms. The spirit of reverence desires that all things should be fittingly done, and naturally seeks to body forth the feelings of awe and aspiration and worship in rite and ceremony and music and symbol and architecture, which thus become the visible speech of the otherwise dumb souls of men. In this way were produced the great church buildings, the religious music, the splendid rituals and liturgies and the whole system of religious symbolism. Much of this is needed for the full expression of man's religious nature, and when that which is perfect is come we shall have these things also in perfection.

But these things, though connected with religion, are not religion in God's sight. They are simply the æsthetic and contemplative

side or aspect of religion. Persons of taste and culture, or persons of contemplative type, are especially affected by this aspect, and easily mistake these things, or delight in these things, for religion. But the feelings which arise from a well-ordered religious service, or from soaring architecture, or from the harmonious blending of dim religious lights or

> "When through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
> The pealing anthem swells the note of praise": —

these may be only æsthetic emotions with no trace of heart love and devotion. Likewise, the sad delight, the pensive tenderness, the speechless longing developed in poetic and inactive contemplation of life and its vicissitudes and mysteries, may have nothing of religion in them. They may even be compatible with special inhumanity, just as the grief over the woes of a character of fiction is no security for tenderness of heart. Where any of these things are cut loose from righteousness, or are viewed as ends in themselves, they become an abomination to the Lord and to every enlightened

conscience. Balaam is a good example of a man of taste, with fine moral sense, rare poetic feeling and gift of expression, but along with it all and ruining all, he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Often we find persons who as a matter of temperament and constitution have a devotional, meditative, contemplative gift. They abound in the East. The Catholic church furnishes more examples than the Protestant church, but specimens are everywhere to be found. They have a natural talent for religion. This, too, is to be desired as preparation for religion. It secures a religious naturalness and ease and propriety which can hardly be otherwise attained. But this, too, is not religion at all, until it is brought into connection with righteousness and the fundamental aim to do the will of God. So far as it falls short of this, it is purely a matter of temperament and may be utterly selfish and irreligious in the sight of God.

Thus against all who would compound with duty for something less than obedience, or who would put something else in its place, I hold

up the simplicity and inexorable rigor of our Master's requirement for discipleship. Now I wish to hold up the same simplicity as a source of comfort and relief to another class of persons.

There are many thoughtful persons in most churches who have been confused by the fancy that some kind of peculiar subjective experience is necessary in order to be religious, and they have sought to have the experience and have never had anything which seemed to them to come up to the language they hear about it. Righteousness they can understand. Keeping the commandments of God is also a clear idea. But they suppose there is something beyond this which must be experienced before one may count himself a disciple of Christ. And because they have never experienced anything of the kind they are often confused and disturbed, even fearing sometimes that they have neither part nor lot in the matter. Now to all such, obedience is the only test of discipleship and love. We are not required to have experiences, or revelations, or

outpourings of any kind. We are required simply to surrender ourselves to God, trusting in his mercy and keeping his commandments. Love, faith, trust, discipleship — all are expressed, revealed, and tested in and by obedience. We are not, then, to undertake any examination of our feelings, the depth of our repentance, the intensity of our desires, the warmth of our emotions; we are simply to begin at once the life of righteousness, looking unto our Master for all needed help and grace. The set purpose to serve and please him by keeping his commandments is the only true mark of the disciple.

And after we have fixed this thought in our minds and have seen that the moral will to please God by lives of righteousness is the central thing, we next need to see that the religious life will manifest itself differently in different persons. The error I have been dealing with has led to a very general fancy that there is some one type of religious experience to which all should conform; and the attempt has been made to cut all experience according

to a common pattern. The language and experience of maturity have been required of childhood; and persons of wholesome training and good moral habits have been expected to undergo the same struggles as the outbreaking sinner who reforms. But this is the result of gross ignorance, both pedagogical and religious. There are different types of religious experience with different persons, and there are different stages of religious experience with the same person; and this fact has to be regarded by all religious guides and teachers who aim to lead and not mislead.

These different types are found in all Christian bodies which have lived long enough to have all types of humanity within them. There is first the purely ethical type. Religion is righteousness; it is the moral law conceived as the will of God. This is the simplest and surest type. It is level to every intellect and to every conscience. It is not a matter of fervors, nor of deep meditations, nor of flaming raptures, but of loyalty to righteousness and to God, who is the fountain and author of right-

eousness. This is the religion of the Synoptic Gospels and of St. James's Epistle. It is also the religion of most thoughtful young people of wholesome moral training and habits. Through obedience to conscience and the God of conscience they find peace.

But there are other persons to whom this phase of Christian doctrine is inadequate. It is not that they are less moral than the others, they are often more so; but they cannot find peace through obedience alone. The law is more than a rule which might be kept; it is a spirit which can never be exhausted. Hence they can never rest in the contemplation of their own performances. They must be taken out of themselves and learn that we are saved by grace through faith; and only thus can they find peace. This is religion of the Pauline type. It is not immoral; it does not aim to escape duty; but it is another type of thought than that of St. James's Epistle.

Again, with many there is a still deeper need than either of these types recognizes. This is the need for oneness and fellowship

with God now and here. This type especially appears in the writings of St. John, where we find a deal of mystical matter about the vine and branches, the indwelling of God; and life eternal is identified with the knowledge of God.

These three types appear in the New Testament and in the history of the church. They are implicit in the religious nature itself; and if men were perfect they would all find expression in every Christian. But as men are rarely all-sided enough to represent normal humanity, we find religious bodies and individuals tending to some one type rather than including them all. But all of these types have to be tested by righteousness. Otherwise salvation by faith may easily pass into immorality, and mystic contemplation and fervor may issue in practical indifference to the work of the world and in dissolving moral distinctions themselves away in an emotional haze.

Now the only way in which we can escape these dangers and provide for all types is by beginning with the moral type and allowing

free development without prescribing any experience or pattern of any kind. But the keeping the commandments of God must always be fundamental; the essential root of the whole matter. There is no other requirement, and no other may be imposed. This is particularly to be observed in the case of the young. We must impose on them no demands for deep experiences, or striking sentiments, or doctrinal insight, or emotional fervors of any sort, but simply obedience in their measure to the will of God. The apprehension of the full system of Christian truth is not given to any one at once, but must be slowly learned in life itself; and we can make no greater error than to demand from children the thought and feeling of mature life. At best they can only repeat the language without entering into its meaning. The meaning itself is revealed only to religious maturity. The weakness and sinfulness of human nature are discerned only in a knowledge of life and the sterner conflicts of faith. The blessedness of salvation by grace through faith is felt only after the moral ideal

has revealed the imperfection of our best efforts. The attraction of the heavenly life can be strongly felt only after the vicissitudes of our earthly existence have shattered the hopes of this. It is not edifying to hear children talking fluently or otherwise about these matters; for they have not had the experience necessary to give understanding.

Christianity has a religion for all sorts and conditions of men, for all ages and temperaments. There is a bright and cheerful religion for childhood and youth, and a more sombre and deeper-toned religion for later years. It has matin bells for life's morning and vesper songs for the night. Work and prayer, contemplation, obedience, aspiration, communion, all mix and mingle in the complex experience of the Christian community; but the one thing common to all, the one thing with which all may begin and which none may ever outgrow, is obedient loyalty to the spirit and commands of our Lord. Beyond this there is no common pattern of religious experience, and it is not desirable that there should be. The inner life

will show all the variations of age and temperament and training and personal experience which are natural to our human lot. God makes persons alike in the religious life as little as he makes them alike in mind or body or circumstances.

To sum up the matter. If our hearts condemn us in this matter of obedience, God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things. But if our hearts condemn us not, let us have confidence toward God, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

X

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD

X

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. — *Phil.* 2 : 12, 13.

MANY texts are so great, so many sided, that they can hardly be expressed except in contradictory forms of speech. The statement of the truth from one point of view seems to conflict with the statement of the same truth from another point of view. This seeming contradiction runs through the entire language of life, and we have a striking illustration in our text. We are commanded to work out our own salvation, and in the next clause we are told that it is God who worketh in us to will and to work. We are to work because it is God who works in us. We cannot work apart from God, and God also works only in connection with our working.

There is no difficulty in such forms of

speech except for those persons who deal in words only, and who are ignorant of the way in which language is used in real life and who are given over to verbal quibble and cavil. The text is simply a specification in the spiritual life of that general division of life between God and man which runs through the whole human realm. It announces nothing new or strange and nothing which is peculiar to religion or theology, but rather a familiar principle which underlies all our experience. Human life everywhere presents this double aspect of man's dependence on his own efforts and of his dependence on God, and it would be impossible to express the full truth without bringing both facts into view. In practice we emphasize one or the other according to the needs of the case.

We may illustrate this double aspect of our life by the case of the farmer. He depends for a crop at once on his own efforts and on the laws and processes of Nature which at bottom root in the will and purpose of God. Of himself he can raise no blade of grass or

grain of corn, and yet there will never be a harvest unless he plows and sows and carefully tends the growing crop. And if there were a farmer who from his faith in Providence, or from a persuasion that of himself he could do nothing, should neglect to plow and to sow, we know that Providence would leave him to destitution and starvation. We should say to such a one, You should not depend on Providence, you must depend on yourself. You must work out your own salvation or you will come to poverty, to rags, and to starvation.

But on the other hand there might be a farmer who in shallow thought and self-conceit should say, I do not pray for my daily bread, I work for it and get it for myself. I raised these crops and I have no need of anything beyond myself. We should remind such a one that of himself he could do nothing. Of course he must work, and yet after all it is God who works in Nature, to will and to work of his own good pleasure, for it is God who maintains the steadfast ordinances of the world, and all these influences of earth and

air and sky out of which the harvest comes run back to the divine thought and will. And so finally the springing grass and the ripening corn are God's work, and thus it is that God giveth us our daily bread.

This serves to illustrate the double aspect of human life, our dependence on ourselves and our dependence on God. The full truth is expressed only when we recognize both elements. What sorry work we should make of it if we had two schools of agriculture, one insisting on man's freedom and ignoring his dependence, the other insisting on his dependence and ignoring his freedom and the part it has to play. These two schools of agriculture would be the analogue of the two tendencies in historic theology, one emphasizing the human side and the other emphasizing the divine side, and both failing duly to recognize the fact that without both sides the true order of life cannot be expressed.

The deepest thought of God is not that of ruler, but of Father; and the deepest thought of men is not that of subjects, but of children.

The deepest thought concerning God's purpose in our life is not salvation, but the training and development of souls as the children of God. Salvation or redemption is but an incident or implication of this deeper purpose, and must be interpreted accordingly. And in this general order of training God has provided for man a vast realm of possibility both in man himself and in the world about him. But the realization of those possibilities in life belongs to man. The physical world is stored with possibilities of beauty and productiveness, but it is left to man to bring them out into realization. The animal world admits of indefinite improvement under human direction. As St. Paul has said, the whole creation groans and travails in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, as if all these hidden possibilities repressed and held back by man's failure were in secret pain and longing for the time when men should manifest themselves as the sons of God, and thus help all the hidden beauty and life and wonder to realization. And so in every department

of human life, in society, in the family, in art and science and literature, there are manifold possibilities, but all waiting for the same manifestations of the sons of God. Preëminently is this the case in the spiritual life itself. God waits to bestow himself upon us, to lift us up to spiritual development, but it cannot be done because of the lack of our cooperating will.

Throughout this unfolding and training, God will do nothing for us which we ought to do for ourselves. To this reserve God is pledged by wisdom and goodness. It is not his purpose to make us passively happy, but actively good. He gives us nothing ready made, not even ourselves. We must develop ourselves into power and efficiency. We must develop and train our faculties. We must mould our character and thus our future. We must put our own image and superscription upon life as the condition of all progress worth having and of all life worth living. The goods of the passive nature soon cloy. We find true and abiding satisfaction only in that which

we ourselves produce. It would be mere pauperism of soul could we live in the passive voice. The living energies of the will would slumber, and our life would be morally on a level with that of the cattle. But we are not God's paupers; we are God's children, and he summons us to be workers together with him in the divine labor of realizing his will and building up his kingdom, whether in ourselves or in the world.

This passive conception of spiritual blessedness, which is prominent in popular religious thought, is little more than a reflex of human laziness. It is further confirmed by the traditional conception of salvation as a transaction of legal and forensic character, which is completed once for all and which is done for us. Whether we are saved or not then depends on this judicial transaction. If it has taken place, justice has no longer any claim on us and we are saved; otherwise we are under the curse of the law, and the wrath of God abideth on us. But Christian thought has pretty much discounted this notion. Salvation is seen to be

not a finished fact, but a continual and vital process. In the book of Acts we are told that the Lord added to the church such as were becoming saved. In one sense every one is saved whose heart says Amen to the will of God. This is the dividing-line between the children of this world and the children of the Kingdom; but in another and deeper sense no one is saved as a completed work — we are becoming saved; that is, the will of God is becoming progressively wrought out in us and we are being transformed into his image, brought into deeper sympathy with himself and going on with him in growing fellowship and deepening life. This is the sense in which salvation is taken in our text. It is not enough that we cease from rebellion. We must come into positive co-working with God, that he may realize in us and through us his gracious purpose, and lift us to heights of knowledge, of power, and of love. In this sense we are to work out our own salvation and never to rest, but ever to go on under the inspiration and help of God who worketh in

us. As the intellectual life forever grows, so the spiritual life must forever grow; the limit in both cases is the fullness of God. We must then give up the notion of salvation as something in which we are passive, or as something which may be completed once for all, and rather discern in it the progressive realization of the will of God in us, in which moreover we are actively to share.

This general fact that we must depend both on God and on ourselves is well worth considering, both for counsel and for exhortation. As Christians we often overlook this division of labor and expect God to do many things for us which we ought to do for ourselves. This is one great reason for our slow progress. Both in the inner life of the spirit and in the outer world of society and politics and international relations we are prone to fall back upon God, when we should fall back upon ourselves. If society gets into a bad way we wonder why God does not come to the rescue, and often some good people think that the end of the world must be at hand, or that

there must be a speedy return of Christ to set things right. Or if through ignorance or disregard of economic and industrial and sanitary laws a famine or pestilence stalks abroad, we are horror-struck and call loudly upon Heaven for help. Or if through cowardice and selfishness and greed, social and international relations get tangled and earthquakes begin to rumble under the foundations of society, we marvel at the divine indifference. But this indifference is both what we deserve and what we need for our discipline. We must work out our own salvation. There is a promised land, but God is in no hurry to have it occupied except by people of the right sort. He allowed the weak-hearted cowards who came out of Egypt to wander around in the wilderness until they died off, and another generation of more grit had been raised up. Everything is free, but it is sold at a price. God gives everything, but he does not cast pearls before swine.

Often we ask God to pity the poor, send the gospel to the heathen, etc., when the one and only thing needed is our own pity and

our own work. We offer prayers which we ought to answer ourselves, or prayers which are shown to be utterly perfunctory by the fact that if we meant them we should be up and doing. We have no right to ask God for anything concerning which we are not utterly in earnest and concerning which we are not seeking to do with our might whatever may lie in our power. Such asking and only such asking is prayer. This is the meaning of the strange parable of the unwilling householder who would not rise and give bread to his friend because he was his friend, but yielded to his importunities. Heaven hears then, and only then, when man is so much in earnest that he both asks and knocks, and not only in words, but in deeds as well.

Again, we overlook this fact of a division of labor in a great deal of our criticism of the order of the world. There are many persons who spend much time in criticising the universe. It is a hard world, a bad world, and often we ask ourselves, If God be good, how can these things be? But here also our won-

der is misplaced. God's world is good, but its goodness so far as man is concerned consists in the possibility of its being made a great deal better. Its capacity for indefinite improvement in response to the aspiration, the strenuous will, the determined and continuous effort of manly men, that is the goodness of the world. It is a hard world for ignorance, for selfishness, for laziness, for animalism, for shiftlessness, but if men were generally manifested as the sons of God there would be a new earth. Only think of the changes that would take place in life if men began at once to love God with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. Selfishness would vanish. Envy and heartburnings would cease. Ignorance would soon disappear. Disease would also pass away. The wealth wasted on folly or destroyed in crime could be used for improving human conditions. Under those circumstances the earth would soon become a garden of the Lord. The world is good or bad as we make it, and it is generally as good as men deserve.

Again, this division of labor appears also in the inner life of the spirit. In the formal religious life itself, without doubt, salvation is of grace, but equally without doubt that is a mistaken conception of salvation which does not involve our most strenuous and most devoted effort in spiritual things. Salvation, as I have said, must be interpreted in accordance with God's deepest purpose in human life, the training and development of souls as the children of God. Any other conception becomes simply a premium on indolence and a damage to character. Hence within the spiritual life man must gird himself for watchfulness, for thoughtfulness, and must summon the living energies of the will if he would overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and rise into the life of the spirit.

And this is well. It is not pleasing to our indolence or love of ease, but in our higher moments we see that it could not be otherwise. Religious history abounds in attempts to evade the need of working out our own salvation. There have been schemes of mechanical

salvation by magical rites or external ceremonies. Proxy salvations have also abounded, and a great variety of moral hocus-pocuses have claimed to secure salvation. But sooner or later we see that they will not do. No amount of passive pleasure which might be mechanically administered would long satisfy the living spirit. Even to be plucked up and planted in heaven would give no abiding satisfaction. To have the filial spirit is the central thing, and then by practice in loyalty and work and self-sacrifice and helpfulness to enter into fellowship with God, into sympathy with his thought for men, to work together with him in bringing in the kingdom of righteousness and love, and thus to grow into his likeness and into him forever. It is not a question of meriting salvation by our good works; that is an obsolete notion. Our good works held up against the still white splendor of God's holiness would show even more pitiable than our knowledge if held up against the background of God's omniscience. The filial spirit working itself out in loving submission and

active obedience, this only is salvation. God above looking down in condescending grace and loving invitation, and man below looking up in filial surrender and aspiration, and then the soul's Godward flight forever and ever — there is no other salvation.

Now we must familiarize our thought with these things and ponder them in our hearts. We must remember that there is an order of law which is never relaxed, and that God bestows his gifts only upon conditions, and since those conditions are expressions of his love and wisdom, they can never be abolished or foregone. There is an unseemly relaxation in Christian thought to-day on this subject, partly, I suppose, as a reaction against the harsh and often immoral utterances of an earlier time. God was then conceived as a governor, whose chief function seemed to be to inflict penalties, and these penalties were conceived in a crude fashion which revolted our sense of justice. As a reaction we have fallen into a moral flabbiness which is equally far from the truth. There is a very general

fancy that we can drift into blessedness; that if obedience is too hard for us it is no great matter, as everything will come out all right in the end; that if the gate be strait and the way narrow we may take some pleasanter road and reach the same goal. It might indeed look better if we kept the commandments; but after all God will not be too strenuous, and if we insist upon it he will surely give in to our desires for fun and sport. All of this will happen then, and only then, when we can reap a harvest of wheat from the sowing of weeds; meanwhile, and we cannot too much consider it, the law holds, whatsoever a man soweth, that and only that shall he reap.

Again, misled by a false notion of the divine working, we look for some spiritual manifestation outside of us instead of through us, which shall take the labor off our hands and gratify our desire for ease and for the marvelous. This is that false conception of the supernatural which seeks after signs and wonders, and which is not properly religious

at all. It is not interested in righteousness, but in show and sensation and excitement. In all of this we are mistaken, and unless we change our minds we shall be miserably disappointed. We must then deepen our sense of responsibility and learn that Heaven helps only those who help themselves.

Thus far in emphasis of our own obligation and responsibility God does not heed us; he can wait. In the great field where he has taken us into partnership, what he does will depend on what we do. He will do nothing in this field without our coöperation. If we desire weeds and poverty and rags and disease and ignorance and social disorder, we can have them; and we shall have them unless we resolutely gird ourselves to struggle against them and to labor for the highest things. This is the condition of any real spiritual development on our part, and to this condition we are rigorously held. We should not then go far astray if we decided that everything depends on ourselves, and that we must work and pray as if God had nothing to do

with the matter. Only thus can we truly discern the significance of our work and faithfulness, and only thus can we come to appreciate the abundant life to which we are called. But when we have said this, we must next emphasize the other clause of our text, that it is God who worketh in us. We need to dwell on this also to save ourselves from discouragement and despondency, and to get the right view of life in general. Human life when measured by the seen is poor and pitiable. Human life when considered in abstraction from some underlying divine power and purpose does seem futile and resultless. The irony of life is so evident. How dieth the wise man? as the fool. And what profit hath he of all his labor under the sun? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Feelings of this sort come to us all at times. And for them there is but one remedy; we must fall back on the thought of God. He is the great and everlasting worker. He has ever our good at heart. He desires for us all the best things. The soul that hungers and thirsts after right-

eousness shall be filled, the pure in heart shall see God, the meek shall be guided in judgment and the meek shall be taught his way. When we have done our part, then we may with confidence stand still and see the salvation of God.

Upon this faith in God as the eternal worker our faith rests. We see and know but little. The future both of ourselves and of society is almost entirely hidden from us. By no foresight of calculation can we penetrate its depths. That out of these efforts of ours, however well meant, a spiritual temple fit for the divine indwelling will rise depends on our faith in God; that the multitudinous strivings of man shall lead to a redeemed society depends on our faith in the divine order and guidance of the world. And this is our Christian faith, which faith we have as the great anchor to our souls; and in this faith we do our work and leave the rest to God.

What God would do for a community thus bent on doing the will of God and working together with him it would be hard to say.

Reference has already been made to the social changes that would result if we could all begin to love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. And this would indeed be a long step toward a new heaven and a new earth. But there seems room for thinking of even greater results than these. We often think of nature as something fixed and completed, and thus we fancy that no great development of humanity is possible upon the earth. In fact, however, nature itself is only a continuous process representing no static fact and barrier for God, but merely the present form of his working. The result is that nature continually is or becomes that which God wills it to be or become. So far as man is concerned nature is the environment under which he holds his life, and is by no means independent of what man is. In the divine plan nature is adjusted to man quite as much as man is adjusted to nature. Each is in a way the counterpart of the other, and hence it is permitted to say that if human society should pass into higher spiritual development so that

it could be trusted with greater powers and opportunities, the environment would change to correspond. The larger spiritual life would have a better and fairer physical setting, and nature would become the more pliant instrument and effective servant of humanity. In this connection of course we can say nothing positive, but it is permitted, if not to see visions, at least to dream dreams. Both man and nature are moving along parallel lines on an open curve, the greater part of which is hidden from our vision; but in any case both nature and man are moving under the guidance of the Supreme Being in whom all things live and move and have their existence.

A word in closing to ward off a possible misunderstanding. How shall we work out our salvation? Not by ascetic retirement from the claims of life, nor yet by any formal religious gymnastics, but by faithfully abiding in the place where we are, and by faithfully performing the duties which rise in our lives. We should accept our lives as God's gift and our duties as his will. We should bring the thought

of God into our lives and seek to relate them to him and to please him. Then the miracle of the burning bush would be repeated; a thorny and dusty bush it may seem, but bring God into it and it would begin to kindle with divine meanings and to glow with a divine presence.

XI

LAW OF SUCCESSFUL LIVING

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"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." — *Matthew* 6 : 33.

In the preceding sentences Jesus explains the Gentile theory of life. Its questions are: What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? These, our Lord admits, are important matters. "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." But they are not the deepest and most essential thing. When they are not subordinated to something higher, our life tends to sink to an animal level, or to lose itself in petty vanities and unworthy externalities. And unless this tendency be checked, it may go on, and often does go on, until the result is earthly, sensual, and devilish.

Now what our Saviour proposes is not to do away with the sense life, after the manner of ascetics, but to subordinate it to a higher

aim and ideal, which shall include the lower while transcending it. Of course we must eat and drink and dress; here the Gentiles, ancient and modern, are right. But there is more in life than eating, drinking, and dressing; here the Gentiles, ancient and modern, are wrong. We must seek first the kingdom of God; that is, we must make the will of God the central thing and build our lives on and around that. Then our lives will fall into their true order. Subordinate things will take their proper subordinate relations. There will be harmony instead of discord in our lives. Our souls will be filled with the peace which arises from obedience to their true law; and all things needful will be added as a natural consequence. No mechanism can run successfully, unless the law of its structure be regarded. Without this, there must be friction, grinding, jarring, destruction. No organism can be in health unless its organic laws are obeyed. Without this, there must be discomfort, distress, disease, and death. In like manner, the life of the soul must be discordant

and diseased unless its true law be regarded. We have, then, in our text a prescription for successful living. Seek first the kingdom of God — that is, make the will of God the central thing and subordinate life to it — and all will be well.

Now, this kingdom of God, what does it mean? If the kingdom of God should really come among us, what would the fact be? In our earthiness of thought and lack of spiritual insight, we might easily fancy that some great manifestation would be made to the senses. The New Jerusalem might descend out of heaven with its walls of precious stones, its pavements of gold, and its gates of pearl. There would be something which we could *see;* and the glory would shine afar off, and the nations would gather to behold the sight. And thus the kingdom of God would be among men. But a moment's thought convinces us that this would be only a celestial show, having no spiritual significance whatever. There would be nothing moral or moralizing in such a performance. But the Lord

looketh at the heart, and the kingdom of God can come with meaning only in the heart and life. The kingdom of God is within you. It is a mode of living and thinking, not an external show. Hence the coming of the kingdom could only mean the subordination of our hearts and wills to the will of God. It would not appear in the heavens above nor the earth beneath. It would not come with sense observation of any kind. It would appear first of all in the surrendered and obedient will, and then in the multitudinous renovations of life and society which that will would speedily accomplish. It would not consist in any other worldliness, but in the subordination of the great normal human life with all its interests to the will of God.

But this does not attract us, and for two reasons: First, the natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit. They are unattractive to him. A series of beatitudes according to the natural man would have little in common with the beatitudes pronounced by our Lord. Such a series would run: Blessed

are the rich. Blessed are they that live in fine houses and make a great show. Blessed are the well-fed and prosperous. Blessed are they who need not work. Blessed are they who can make great social display and are envied by their neighbors. Such are the beatitudes of the Gentiles.

The second reason why the spiritual conception of the kingdom of God does not attract us is that it involves work on our part. The kingdom will not come of itself; we must work to bring it in. We must gird ourselves for strenuous effort both in the inner life of the spirit and in the outer life of society. We must ourselves see to it that righteousness, and justice, and high ideals of life stand fast, and bear rule and become realized in us and through us and in the community. But this means work, unslumbering, untiring, aggressive work; and this is unpleasing to our native and acquired indolence.

In further exposition of our subject, and that we may see the importance of building our lives around the will of God, we note the

relation of law in general to the divine will. But this law is nothing externally imposed upon things, a piece of outside legislation; it is organized into things. It expresses their nature, their constitution, the condition of their well-being, and even of their being at all. A crude fancy borrowed from human law possesses popular thought on this matter; and we think of God's laws as arbitrary rules imposed from without, like the whims of ignorant legislators, which but for arbitrary penalty might be disobeyed with impunity. But God's laws are all organic. The laws of the organism are founded in the nature of the organism; and if we wish to live we must obey them. Any departure from them means disturbance, and if persistent and complete, it means death. God's laws are equally organic in the human realm. The rules for right living, both individual and social, are founded in the nature of things. They result from God's purpose in our creation and the constitution which he has given us. If an organism could become self-conscious and have insight

into the ends foreshadowed in its structure, it would see that to decline those ends and depart from the laws thence resulting, could only mean destruction. And if God has made us for himself, if he has put the true ends of life in the spiritual realm, it is equally plain that there can be for us no success, but only thwarting, disappointment, dissatisfaction, failure, so long as we refuse to seek the ends and obey the laws which are founded in our essential nature. To the Christian, therefore, who finds the true meaning of our life, not in what we have in common with the animals, but preëminently in that religious endowment by which we transcend them, it becomes a self-evident truth of spiritual biology that only as we relate ourselves to the will of God can we hope to attain to peace, spiritual health, and essential life. The will of God, then, has an organic significance for our well-being. We must interpret it not as an arbitrary rule, but biologically and as an organized natural law. Only from this point of view do we truly discern its absolute significance for our

human life. The diagnosis of humanity's great malady is simple. We are refusing our true life, the law of the kingdom, and the prescription is equally simple: We must seek first the kingdom.

In our superficial and unspiritual way of thinking we easily overlook this fact, and suppose God's will, like human statutes, can be evaded. But organic laws can never be escaped. The laws of health are not made by physicians or works on hygiene; they are only declared; and if all the physicians were silent, and all the works on health were destroyed, the laws would still remain, and whoever would live must regard them. The charts and buoys do not make the channel, or the rocks and shoals; they point them out, and whoever would enter the harbor must keep to the channel. In like manner neither the church nor even the Bible makes any law of spiritual life; it only declares or reveals the law which exists in the nature of things, and which needs no further enactment for its authority or its vindication. And if both church and Bible were

away, the supreme laws of life would be as little affected as the channel into the harbor would be changed if we tore up the charts and removed the buoys and lighthouses. Imagine the folly of a shipmaster who should think himself free to sail anywhere if he first threw the charts overboard. So great is his folly who fails to see that the laws of life are what they are, whatever we may think about them, and that their consequences will follow with the inevitability of gravitation, whether we like it or not.

And because God's will is organic, it is being done in some sense all the time. This will has a double aspect: It means help and furtherance and blessing for the obedient, and loss and thwarting and overthrow for the disobedient. It is carrying the obedient safe into the harbor, and it is hurling the disobedient on the rocks and over the falls: and in both cases alike God's will is being done. It is the same law of gravitation that holds the solid building firmly on its base, and that drags the flimsy structure down into ruin. Judgment may not be immediately revealed,

but is going on all the while, as must be the case with all organic laws and their consequences. And often we see the judgment going on. We see powers misused being cancelled, and opportunities slighted being withdrawn. In the growing dullness and dimness respecting higher things we see the gathering and deepening shades of the outer darkness. Men call these things natural consequences, but natural consequences represent the will and ordinance of the Eternal.

The absolute condition, then, of successful living is to seek first the kingdom of God; that is, to relate our lives to God and his will, to see and value things as he does, and to order our lives accordingly. But men are perpetually trying to evade this condition, or they are ignorant of it; and the result is the confusion, the distress, the uproar, the strife, the sin, which are everywhere around us.

Most of us stop with the Gentiles. The supreme questions are: What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And wherewithal shall we be clothed? And devotion to these things

develops into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. The first and least result is soul-hunger and starvation. Man cannot live by bread alone, however fine the quality. He was made for God, to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. His wants and aspirations are infinite; and only God can satisfy them. When, then, man seeks to live on the earthly and visible plane, the sure result is a deep dissatisfaction of soul. Perhaps in youth, when the deeper nature is unstirred, and when experience has not revealed the emptiness of all things earthly, we may find satisfaction in them. But as life wears on, and the nerves grow dull to everything but pain, and the inevitable overturnings come, then the years draw nigh when men say, we have no pleasure in them. Then men become cynical and pessimistic and weary of life. And no wonder. This is the sure outcome of the Gentile theory of life. The visible life when unrelated to some divine meaning and outcome is a poor and mean thing. When "faith is dry" men are but

> "flies of latter spring,
> That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
> And weave their petty cells and die."

We need the stimulus and inspiration of great hopes and a divine outlook in order to think worthily of this life or worthily to endure its burdens. But the Gentiles do not have these ; and thus tend to sink into soul-weariness and destitution. Sometimes the lack of inspiration allows the simple burden of physical toil to fall with crushing weight upon us. Sometimes where the physical demands are not great the result is insufferable ennui, and the poor soul is driven through all manner of waste places, seeking rest and finding none. But in both cases what is needed, and the only thing that can help, is an alliance with the kingdom of God, a thought and plan of life which takes hold on the eternal.

But this is not the only result of the Gentile plan of living. The prodigal not only starves, but in a great many cases he finds himself among the swine before he is through with the lust of the flesh. But aside from this

obscene result, which carries its own condemnation, there is another and more subtle outcome. The further result of the Gentile scheme of life is to measure life by unreal standards, thus producing a set of fictitious values and ignoring the true ones. Here the lust of the eye and the pride of life comes in; and the way is opened to boundless vanity and rivalry and envy, and heartburning and every evil work. One great source of trouble in the world lies in our false estimate of things, and this in turn roots in the Gentile view. The world does not care much for substance, but only for show. It does not care much even for intellectual gifts except as they minister to vanity. The man is lost sight of in his accidents. That the soul should be living in some noisome back alley of mean and petty thoughts matters not, if the body lives in the avenue. That the soul should be poor and miserable and blind and naked is a thing of no concern, provided the body be clothed in purple and fine linen. Dives may be an utter pauper before God, but we are careless as to that, so long as he fares

sumptuously every day. What we call the world, in the religious sense, is built on notions of this sort; and out of them spring a swarm of maxims which make up the wisdom of this world. Out of them, too, spring a large part of the vanities and rivalries and envy and heartburning which curse us. We are lacking in true Christian self-respect. Men are despised for being poor, they despise themselves for being poor, and because they are not rich they envy those that are. And the rich in turn often esteem themselves in terms of their wealth, as if this meant anything before God. Out of this state of things come social problems, and such questions as, "How shall the church reach the masses?" and all manner of confusion and manifold evil works.

The only way out of this trouble is to revise our conception of values, and to put the kingdom of God first. If we do this and look at real values, at values of intellect, heart, and conscience, and subordinate our doing and thinking to the kingdom of God, there will be no trouble in solving all other practical prob-

lems that may arise. And until we do this we must worry along as at present in blindness and confusion and bitterness of soul. There can be no abiding peace or joy, whether in the personal or in the social life, until men make the kingdom of God first and fundamental.

This is something which reformers especially need to remember. They are not over successful in changing the heart; indeed, they seldom report any conversions. Accordingly, they devote themselves to whitewashing the sepulchre and making clean the outside of the cup and platter. And they have a deal to say about the influence of environment, and sometimes they are sure that a proper environment would insure right character. Well, environment is important, and we should always aim to improve it so far as we can; but no deep and lasting reformation of man and society can be reached in this way. Some hygienic virtues and elementary decencies may be thus secured, but the root of the matter lies deeper. For life tends to make its own environment, and the environment becomes an

image of those who are in it. Low souls, left to themselves, will soon have a corresponding environment; and a pure heart will not be long in reacting against an impure environment. It is said that during the French Revolution a noble family were driven out of their home and a peasant moved in; and in a few months he had moved the pigs, sty and all, into the castle. Such a nature will always reproduce itself in its environment. One who is a sloven or slattern within will not be long in finding appropriate outward manifestation. When the slums are in the people, the people will soon be in the slums. Hence to labor with environment alone is to doctor symptoms rather than diseases; and to mistake effects for causes is to seek to dry up the stream while the fountain is in perpetual flow. The evils of humanity, environment and all, spring from the failure to seek first the kingdom of God; and if the earth were all cleaned up like a garden of God, and men were left unchanged, it would not be long before we were back in the old trouble. For these false ideas

of life, these false ideals, the elevation of the accidents to the place of essentials, the devotion to the animal and the vanities, would soon bring forth again the results they now so prolifically produce.

In the running of machinery it is of great importance that everything should be rightly centred. When a great fly-wheel is truly centred it spins noiselessly on its axle and seems to sleep in its most rapid motion. But let it be a little eccentric — that is, a little off the centre — and it begins to strain upon its bearings and may tear itself loose and become an instrument of destruction. Our lives also run well only when truly centred on the will of God; and when they are eccentric, that is, are centred on some other and lower thing, then come the friction, the wrenching, the tragedy, the destruction, which result from eccentric living.

There is only one panacea for the woes of life and society, and that is to seek first the kingdom of God. Our Lord announced this law in the Sermon on the Mount, and if he

should return to earth to-morrow he could announce no other. There can be no successful living on the plane of animalism. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life can only lead to vanity and envy and strife and every evil work. There can be no successful social work on a plane of selfishness and injustice and mutual distrust and hostility. On that plane there can be only social disturbance and convulsion. Selfishness tries to get and selfishness tries to keep; and at once the air is murky with distrust and suspicion, and wars, large and small, follow. Peace and progress are possible only in the measure in which justice, good-will, and mutual confidence obtain among men. It is beyond any question that the only sure and effective way of healing our social woes is to begin to love God with all our heart and our neighbors as ourselves. Until this is done our evils will remain, in spite of all philosophic and philanthropic efforts and exorcisms. Only in the doing of God's will is our peace. And the same is equally true and equally manifest

in the individual life. We know perfectly well that if we were willing to do God's will and to have it done, we should be at peace; but we are not willing; and the storm continues.

And to the thoughtful mind this would not be truer or even more manifest if it were written across the sky. The will of God is the essential nature of things, and with it we have to reckon. We cannot evade it, we cannot successfully resist it. The fates lead the willing, the unwilling they drag, was a word of ancient wisdom; and in a figure it expresses the fact. In the leading and the dragging alike the nature of things, that is, the will of God, finds expression; but it is the difference of life or death to us whether we are led or dragged.

Now let us consider the promise: "All these things shall be added unto you." Of course this does not mean that then we should be able to get along without work; that would pauperize us. But it means that if life were rightly centred, if the kingdom of God were

made first and fundamental, there would be no trouble in supplying all our subordinate needs. God has made ample provision for them in the furnishing of the world. He knoweth that we have need of these things, and it is not his purpose that his human family should starve. If men do starve, it is not by divine appointment, but because of human ignorance and indolence and thoughtlessness ; for these men themselves are responsible.

Think for a moment of the immediate result if, from to-day on, men put the kingdom of God first and began to love God with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. The armies would be disbanded. The navies would be laid up forever. All the social energies now expended in repressing wrong-doing would be free for the positive service of the community. All the wealth and effort now spent in ministering to the follies and vices of men would be free for helpful service. This sum is enormous. A careful writer on the cost of crime has recently computed that our taxation in the United States directly due to crime

is $200,000,000. When to this we add the positive damage done by the criminal and the negative hindrance to the community due to him, we have a tremendous total. But even this is a small fraction of the sum spent in ministering to the follies and vices of men. All these would disappear if men would seek the kingdom of God; and all this money would be left free for the upbuilding of men. With the vanishing of these follies and vices there would be a corresponding vanishing of disease and increase of productive efficiency. This together with universal industry would soon make the race rich enough to furnish the conditions of a human existence to all its members. Under these conditions knowledge would greatly flourish. Man's control over nature would be indefinitely extended, and disease and pain would be correspondingly eliminated. Nature would be subordinated to human service; and man, freed from breaking drudgery, would have time and leisure for development in the upper ranges of his nature. Art and the arts would flourish. The potentialities of

beauty with which the earth is filled would be summoned forth, and the earth would become a garden of the Lord.

In the social realm the results would be still more blessed. With universal good-will there would be universal peace. If differences arose, they would be easily adjusted, because every one would love his neighbor as himself. All envy, wrath, malice, evil-speaking, and evil-thinking would pass away. All vanity and contempt and superciliousness and assumption, prolific sources of sorrow, would also disappear. Inequalities of fortune or faculty would produce no heartburnings; for the strong would delight to serve and bear the burdens of the weak. In the thought of a common divine fatherhood and human brotherhood all differences would vanish. The ills that are inherent in our earthly lot would be lightened by sympathy, and, so far as possible, shared. Poverty, if it existed at all, would never be allowed to become crushing; as it would never be the outcome of vice and folly. Indeed, honest poverty would suffer very little as it is,

if it were not for knavish and vicious pauperism which hardens the heart of charity and dries up the springs of benevolence. But if the kingdom had come in all hearts, this would not be the case, and there would be no want unrelieved which human power could reach. And in the universal atmosphere of sincerity and good-will how would friendship flourish and all souls expand in joyous fellowship!

Finally note the result in the personal life. We should know and realize the truth of God, and that truth would make us free — free from sham, from falsehood, from delusions, and the fear of death. Life would be seen in its true character and divine significance, and, living or dying, we should be his. The unrest, the discontent, the fever, would vanish as we realized that we are in God's world and must set about our Father's business. It all would follow with the certainty and inevitability of natural law.

If some lake, set in the midst of hills and forests but swept with gales, should become conscious of itself, it might well miss the

knowledge of anything but its own wind-tossed and turbid waters. But let the gales die away, and the hills and heavens above will be perfectly mirrored in the depths below. The application is evident. When the soul is beaten upon by gusts of passion and low ambition, it finds no trace of anything divine in itself or anything else. But let it be still and lift its thoughts heavenward, and it will soon give back the image of the upper sky.

Thus I have sought to unfold the supreme condition of successful living. Thus far I have dwelt upon it under the sterner aspect of law and duty. There it stands, immovable as the mountains, inevitable and inexorable as gravitation. Let me now, in closing, urge it upon you in the higher form of a glorious privilege. It is necessary for the spiritually dull that they feel the compulsion and menace of the law; but for nobler souls that is altogether too low a key. The Kingdom of God — how glorious in its membership! The first-born sons of light, the great intelligences fair

who range above our mortal state, the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the great multitude of the holy dead, the lovers of God and righteousness in all worlds — these are the members, and this the glorious fellowship, bound together in the common love of a common Lord. The Kingdom of God, how glorious also in its aim! For this is nothing less than the full realization of the perfect will of the perfect God, so that the human may become one with the divine. In that large and abundant life, full and complete, we shall live, yet not we, but Christ shall live in us. Then humanity shall be the fit organ for the expression of God; and the divine life shall flow through us and all our thoughts and works, and be the life of our life.

"O Love, that wilt not let us go,
We yield our being up to Thee!
We give Thee back the life we owe,
That in Thy ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be."

Now all things else fade and vanish in com-

parison. How poor and paltry the aim and interests of the Gentiles! Now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

XII

THE MIRACLE OF THE RESURRECTION

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If we heard that a man had died in a neighboring town and had risen from the dead and had ascended into heaven, we should not pay any attention to it. We should not believe the report. We should not even disbelieve it. We should ignore it and should feel somewhat impatient if some one asked us to consider the case. Yet the Christian church still repeats its creed concerning Jesus. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven. Now why do we treat these cases differently? Reflection on this question soon convinces us that the discussion of this subject has been rather confused by a piecemeal treatment. Both friends and foes have been equally to blame. The friends have largely treated of Christianity and miracles, and have viewed the latter as

the evidence for the former, and have taken them as external supports rather than essential parts of the system. The foes have done the same thing. They have asked whether this or that miracle be credible, and when it is taken in isolation it is easy to show that the miracle is not credible. Then comes the familiar debate about miracles and evidence which tends to nothing but confusion. The next thing is the query, whether the doctrine proves the miracle or the miracle proves the doctrine. Soon it is concluded that the doctrine proves the miracle, so that the doctrine is far more acceptable without the miracle than with it. Finally then the miracle is to be set aside as a burden too grievous to be borne, and thus we become rational Christians.

This sort of thing is familiar to all practiced readers, but not all of us see through it. The miracles of Christianity cannot be discussed piecemeal, but only as parts of a system. Christianity itself is essentially supernatural in its idea, and in that sense miraculous. That is, Christianity affirms an ever-living, ever-

working God, in whom we live and have our being and who profoundly cares for his children and is seeking to develop them into his spiritual likeness. In doing this work he maintains the familiar order of nature on which we all depend. He also works through the mind and society, through education and history. In addition he has sent prophets and teachers to reveal his will and to guide us into truth. Finally, in the fullness of time he sent his Son to make the perfect revelation of the Father, and to present the highest assurance of his will and presence, and to furnish the highest inspiration to love and serve him. This conception, as we have said, is essentially miraculous, and it is little less than pathetic that any one who accepts this thought of a self-revealing God and the stupendous miracle of the incarnation of the divine Son should haggle over details of miracles, as if anything depended on them. It is equally incredible, apart from experience, that any opponent of Christianity should think anything gained by cavils at the withered fig-tree, or the fish with the

coin in its mouth, while the fundamental Christian thought is left untouched. Our general conclusion on this subject does not depend on argument alone or chiefly, but also and more fundamentally on our world view and our moral and religious sympathies and tendencies. If we are essentially irreligious and have no sympathy with humanity's search after God, or if we hold a naturalistic philosophy, then there is no use in talking about the resurrection, or even about religion. Equally if we say that God, if there be any, is supremely concerned to keep $\frac{1}{2}mv^2$ a constant quantity at all hazards, and in comparison has little or no interest with spiritualized humanity, there is no question of the resurrection. But if we believe that our race is and always has been in the hands of God, who is leading us on toward himself, then our minds are not closed in advance against the presence of the living God in history and in the mind of man, and that too in such a way that we may discern his presence. The real debate here is not the mere question of miracle, but it is the strife

of two views of life and the world, the higher spiritual view, and the lower material view.

Of course, neither of these views can ever become a matter of strict demonstration or scientific evidence. The lower view is based on certain crude dogmatisms which cannot be established in any scientific or philosophic way, but which in a fashion appeal to the natural man as level to his understanding. Being of the earth earthy, he is satisfied with an earthly view of things. Equally the higher spiritual view admits of no demonstration. The evidence must be of a kind that roots in life and will have something of life's complexity. All that is possible, then, for the Christian is to form an argument that will be consistent with itself and fit into our general scheme of Christian thought. Then it will be the duty of each one to decide for himself between the conflicting views, but in any case we must not expect to construct an argument that will compel belief on the part of unwilling minds. This is not the method of God's dealing with us. There is no argument in

moral matters that forces belief, and it is not desirable that there should be. It must not be thought, however, that faith in the Christian view is any more difficult now than it has been in the past. On the contrary, it is at least as possible to-day as it ever was. In this age, as in all ages, it has been a matter of faith and not of demonstration. Our conclusion is the complex outcome of life, and by no means the colorless result of a syllogism or historical inquiry. It is only the half-educated who fancy that science has made our faith in this matter more difficult. Some persons who have dwelt too long in the cave of dogmatic naturalism, and who are somewhat in the hearsay and uncritical stage of intellect, have been told that belief is unusually difficult to-day. It seems sufficient to tell such persons in reply that they have been misinformed.

Technical evidences of Christianity of the traditional type are not particularly edifying. Christianity is its own best evidence. Any great consistent system which fits into life and which upholds and inspires life is its own

proof. The Christian system, with its history and its present position at the head of all the influences that make for human uplift, is Christianity's great evidence. It roots now and always in the divine, and its miracles are not an outside proof, but a part of the revelation itself. God was not revealing himself exclusively to Sadducees, nor to scientists, but to men as they have lived and live, and if we admit the general Christian conception, its miracles are perfectly natural. They are what we should expect. How should this glorious revelation of God be known except by manifestations which insure that the fact and its meaning should not be lost?

Now from this point of view the resurrection and ascension are just what was needed to make clear what the great revealing movement that culminated in the life of Christ meant. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father. We are prepared to believe anything that fits into this magnificent conception. And what could be more

fitting than that this divine Son, after having revealed the Father and been faithful unto death, should triumph over death and return to his Father again? How simply and worthily it is all told. He arose from the dead, showed himself to his disciples, talked with them of the future of his kingdom, commanded them to go into all the world and preach his gospel, promised to be with them always, and then, while bestowing blessing upon them, vanished out of their sight. What else could have been done on the Christian theory? And if we suppose this to have happened, it is harmonious with the general thought; and however much it may scandalize the Sadducean critic, it seems to have been the thing which the disciples needed and which the church has needed ever since to complete their faith in their Lord.

Of course, as said, this does not admit of demonstration that would force belief upon unwilling minds, and yet, so far as historical inquiry can go, the fact seems to be as well established as could be expected or even de-

sired. The apostles at the beginning were preaching Jesus and the resurrection, and this was the general faith of the church from the start. Something must have happened to change the band of fleeing disciples into these world-defiers and world-conquerors which they so soon become. If there was no fact behind it all, whence did this new conviction and mighty courage come? It is quite idle to talk of vague possibilities of evolution and all that, for these things were not done in a corner, and too much has come from them to suppose the faith fictitious. If nothing had resulted, if there had been only a momentary flicker of enthusiasm, we might well believe that it was all a mistake; but when the Christian church sprang out of it and still endures through faith in it, we certainly need not be ashamed of our faith in the face of anything that science or historical criticism may say. Some will call it the Christian superstition. We call it the Christian faith. To some it is still a stumbling-block and foolishness, to others it is the power of God and the wisdom

of God. As between these views decision must be made by the survival of the fittest, and the court has been in session for nearly two thousand years. The anti-religious views have lived along in the lower ranges of human thought and life, and they have been equally the enemies of humanity, its hopes, its inspirations, and its aspirations. And all the religious views that, for one reason or another, have failed to believe in Jesus and the resurrection have likewise been with us for many centuries, and they maintain only a precarious existence. These views have not been great enough to command the faith or stir the hearts of men. In this fact the survival of the fittest, as the supreme court for considering the matter, hands down a final decision. It only remains that the church shall keep strenuously at work proclaiming the Gospel, the good news of God, the Son who came to show us the Father and to lead us to him, and who, when his revealing work was done, left the visible scene to be the eternal head of his church and the Redeemer of all them that call upon him.

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